

2 EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

3 -----X

4 PENNSYLVANIA STATION AREA

5 GENERAL PROJECT PLAN AND DRAFT EIS

6 VIRTUAL ZOOM PUBLIC HEARING

7 -----X

8 January 20, 2022

9 5:00 P.M.

10

11

12 B E F O R E

13 CELESTE FRYE,

14 The Hearing Officer

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2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good afternoon,
3 everyone. Welcome to the second public hearing for
4 the General Project Plan Draft Environmental Impact
5 Statement and proposed revisions for the proposed
6 Penn Station Area Redevelopment Project, formally
7 known as Empire Station Complex.

8 My name is Celeste Frye with Public Works
9 Partners, and I've been asked by the New York State
10 Urban Development Corporation, doing business as
11 Empire State Development, or ESD, to conduct the
12 virtual public hearing, pursuant to Section 16 of the
13 New York State Urban Development Corporation Act, the
14 UDC Act and Article 8 of the New York State
15 Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing
16 regulations. I will be your hearing officer.

17 Today's hearing is being held pursuant to a
18 legal notice, published in accordance with the UDC
19 Act and the State Environmental Quality Review Act,
20 or SEQRA, in the December 16th, 2021, edition of the
21 New York Daily News.

22 The purpose of this hearing is to afford you
23 an opportunity to make statements and comments about
24 the General Project Plan, Draft Environmental Impact
25 Statement and proposed revisions to the plan.

2 The first public hearing for the project was
3 held on December 8th, 2021. If you provided verbal
4 testimony at the first public hearing, we have your
5 comments; and they will be considered, along with
6 comments provided today and throughout the public
7 comment period which ends on February 22nd, 2022.

8 My purpose is to run the hearing in a fair
9 and impartial manner and to ensure that everyone who
10 wishes to speak has adequate opportunity to be heard.
11 This evening's event is a hearing, not a question and
12 answer session. It is an opportunity for you to
13 present your views so that ESD can consider them in
14 making its final determination.

15 Please note that this hearing is being
16 recorded for internal purposes only. A stenographic
17 transcript is also being made and will be available
18 on ESD's website.

19 I'd like to give some guidance to help you
20 fully participate in this virtual hearing before we
21 formally begin. We are requiring that only
22 presenters share their video during this hearing.
23 For the best viewing experience, we recommend that
24 all participants enable the feature in Zoom that
25 allows you to show only the participants with video

2 enabled. The first two screens that will show after
3 this provide instructions on how to do that. First
4 for a PC or Android device and then the second screen
5 for a Mac or Apple device.

6 This screen is for those participants who
7 wish to view the hearing with American Sign Language
8 interpretation. This screen explains the options
9 that you have for providing comments on the General
10 Project Plan or GPP Draft Environmental Impact
11 Statement or DEIS and ESD's proposed revisions to the
12 plan.

13 If you signed up to speak before the hearing
14 during the registration process, we have your name,
15 and you will be called during the testimony portion
16 of this hearing. If you did not sign up to speak
17 before the start of the hearing but would like to
18 speak, please identify yourself using the "raise
19 hand" function on Zoom. Instructions for this are
20 being shown on your screen right now and will be
21 shown periodically during the hearing.

22 If you're joining us by phone only, you may
23 dial *9 to indicate your desire to provide testimony.
24 Participants using the "raise hand" function or *9
25 will be added to the speaker list. The option to

2 sign up to speak will end at 7:30 p.m.

3 Please note that we will make every effort to
4 prioritize those speakers who did not already provide
5 verbal testimony at the first hearing on December 8th
6 and to honor the order in which participants
7 registered to speak. Those who registered early will
8 be sooner in the order of speaking, and those that
9 registered more recently will be towards the end.

10 At this time, there are more than 250
11 participants who have registered to speak at that
12 hearing. Due to this high level of interest, we
13 anticipate the public testimony portion of this
14 meeting extending late into the night. We thank you
15 for your patience in advance.

16 Written comments may also be submitted via
17 email and will be given the same consideration as
18 those delivered verbally tonight. The chat function
19 of Zoom will not be enabled for this meeting.

20 If you are in need of technical assistance,
21 please direct inquiries to the email address at the
22 bottom of the instructions slides. The email address
23 is help@publicworkspartners.com. This may include
24 requesting information about your place in the order
25 of speakers. Note that this is not the email address

2 at which to submit your written testimony. That
3 email address is pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov, as will
4 be shown on the next slide.

5 I'll give you a moment to review the
6 instructions before I move on again. These
7 instructions will appear periodically during the
8 hearing.

9 Comments presented at this hearing will be
10 taken into consideration by ESD as part of the final
11 review of the proposed project. You also have the
12 opportunity to send in your comments to the email and
13 mailing addresses provided here. For those on the
14 phone, the email address is:

15 Pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov. That's
16 pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov or the original email
17 address for the project, empirestation@esd.ny.gov.

18 Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on
19 February 22nd, 2022. This information is also
20 available on ESD's website.

21 This screen presents the agenda for the
22 remaining of this evening's hearing. The agenda
23 begins with the presentation on the draft GPP,
24 proposed revisions and DEIS, which will last
25 approximately fifteen minutes. Then we will briefly

2 restate the instructions for signing up to provide
3 verbal testimony, after which we will begin to call
4 the names of registered speakers and invite them to
5 give their testimony. Ten-minute breaks will be
6 taken approximately every 90 minutes until all
7 registered speakers have been given the opportunity
8 to speak.

9 Before we begin the testimony portion of this
10 hearing to hear your comments, we'll hear from
11 Holly Leicht, Executive Vice President of Empire
12 State Development, the lead agency for the proposed
13 project, and then from Conner Lacefield of AKRF, the
14 lead consultant supporting ESD in the preparation of
15 the proposed project Environmental Impact Statement
16 for EIS. In addition to Holly Leicht, a number of
17 other representatives from the ESD project team are
18 with us, including:

19 Rachel Shatz, the vice president for Planning
20 and Environmental Review;

21 Marion Phillips, senior vice president of
22 Community Relations;

23 Angel Santana, director of Community
24 Relations;

25 Gabriella Green, vice president of Real

2 Estate Development and Planning;

3 Phil Maguire, vice president of Design and
4 Construction;

5 Terrance Cho, finance director;

6 Richard Dorado, senior counsel;

7 And Anthony Semancik, special counsel.

8 Before we begin the comment portion of --
9 excuse me one moment. Sorry. Before we begin the
10 comment portion of tonight's session, I'd like to
11 introduce Holly Leicht of ESD who will provide a
12 brief summary of the proposed project, the GPP and
13 ESD's staff's proposed revisions to the plan.

14 MS. LEICHT: Thank you, Celeste, and good
15 afternoon. My name is Holly Leicht, and I'm
16 executive vice president of Real Estate Development
17 at EST. As Celeste mentioned, I will be providing a
18 summary description of the proposed project and ESD's
19 process and schedule.

20 This slide provides an overview of the
21 anticipated schedule for completing the General
22 Project Plan and the Environmental Review Process.
23 On February 18th, 2021, the ESD directors certified
24 the DEIS and adopted for public review and comment
25 the Draft General Project Plan or GPP for the

2 project.

3 In accordance with Section 16 of the UDC Act,
4 during the period since that milestone, ESD has
5 worked closely with and consulted the project
6 community advisory committee and its larger working
7 group, including local elected officials and
8 community stakeholders. After considering their
9 comments and recommendations as well as feedback from
10 multiple public forums, ESD staff has responded with
11 proposed revisions to the plan for the project, which
12 I'll summarize shortly.

13 ESD will review and prepare written comments
14 to the -- in response to the substantive comments
15 collected at the first public hearing held on
16 December 8th, 2021, at today's hearing and throughout
17 the comment period, which Celeste mentioned will
18 close on February 22nd, 2022. The compiled comments
19 and responses will be presented as part of the final
20 Environmental Impact Statement expected to be
21 released in the spring of 2022.

22 Based on this additional public input,
23 further changes to the GPP and EIS may be proposed
24 for consideration and action by the ESD Directors.
25 Agency actions on the proposed project cannot be

2 undertaken until the GPP and the EIS are completed
3 and are available to inform the directors'
4 decision-making.

5 As noted earlier, the purpose of today's
6 public hearing is to hear your comments on the draft
7 GPP, DEIS and the proposed revision for the plan for
8 the project. This is not a Q-and-A session, nor a
9 hearing about anything beyond the scope of the
10 proposed draft GPP, DEIS and the proposed revisions.

11 If you're joining us on your computer or via
12 the Zoom app, you'll see my slide presentation on
13 your screen as I speak. If you're joining by phone
14 only, you can access that presentation on ESD's
15 website following today's meeting.

16 The proposed project is a comprehensive plan
17 to revitalize the area around Penn Station and help
18 fund significant transit and public realm
19 improvement. The area of the proposed project is
20 generally bounded by Fifth and Ninth Avenues to the
21 east and west and by West 30th and West 34th Street
22 to the south and north in Midtown Manhattan Community
23 District 4 and 5.

24 The project area includes all portions of
25 nine Manhattan tax blocks and encompasses Penn

2 Station, Madison Square Garden and Moynihan Train
3 Hall, though no new buildings could be constructed on
4 those locations.

5 The proposed project would address the
6 substandard and unsanitary conditions as those terms
7 are defined in the UDC Act by facilitating
8 sustainable transit-oriented redevelopment of eight
9 sites to create a more pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use
10 district. In addition, it would introduce much
11 needed public transportation improvements, including
12 new entrances and access ways to Penn Station and
13 four nearby subway stations and public realm
14 improvements to address open space and pedestrian,
15 bicycle and vehicular circulation and enhance the
16 streetscape.

17 The GPP for the Penn Station area
18 redevelopment project would, among other things,
19 authorize ESD to override the New York City Zoning
20 Resolution and other laws as applicable in accordance
21 with the UDC Act.

22 It's important to note three of the eight
23 proposed sites, shown here as Sites 1, 2 and 3, would
24 accommodate the potential expansion of Penn Station
25 into the block south of the existing station to allow

2 for the creation of new below-grade tracks and
3 platforms to increase station capacity. The design,
4 construction and operation of an expanded Penn
5 Station is being analyzed by the MTA, Amtrak and New
6 Jersey Transit as part of a separate planning and
7 Federal Environmental Review Process.

8 Please note, and it's important to emphasize,
9 that the redevelopment of Sites 1, 2 and 3 would only
10 occur if these blocks are selected as a preferred
11 alternative for Penn Station's expansion through the
12 separate planning and environmental review process.
13 And the final GPP for the proposed project would not
14 authorize commencement of condemnation or acquisition
15 of these blocks.

16 It is anticipated that if the Penn expansion
17 occurs on these sites, it would be acquired by the
18 state or Federal entity to be determined as part of
19 the railroad's review process, and they would
20 ultimately be sold or leased for redevelopment
21 through one or more competitive requests for
22 proposals. Such redevelopment would have to
23 accommodate and be coordinated with the expansion of
24 Penn Station beneath the site and the adjacent
25 streets.

2 In addition to coordinating with MTA, Amtrak
3 and New Jersey Transit with respect to the potential
4 expansion of Penn Station and the proposed GPP public
5 transportation improvement, ESD has collaborated with
6 Vornado Realty Trust, the owner or lessee of most of
7 five of the proposed project development sites, shown
8 as Site 4 through 8 on this slide.

9 The proposed project does not anticipate
10 condemnation of any parcels on these blocks. It
11 should be noted that redevelopment of Sites 4 through
12 8 pursuant to the final GPP and design guidelines
13 cannot commence until ESD executes site-specific
14 agreements with each site developer or owner
15 regarding financial terms, including payment in lieu
16 of taxes or pilots. Specific transit and public
17 realm improvements that will be made on or proximate
18 to each site and other material terms.

19 The planning, design and implementation of
20 public realm improvements have been and will continue
21 to be a joint effort with the railroads with New York
22 City Department of City Planning and the New York
23 City Department of Transportation, as well as private
24 property owners in the project area.

25 ESD established a Community Advisory

2 Committee or CAC comprised of local elected
3 officials, community representatives, urban planners,
4 transportation advocates and other stakeholders to
5 advise us throughout the project. That group met
6 multiple times prior to the adoption of the draft GPP
7 and the issuance of the draft EIS in February of last
8 year.

9 Since that time, ESD staff has worked
10 intensively with the CAC and its larger working
11 groups and developed the proposed revisions to the
12 plan in response to a set of recommendations prepared
13 by that working group and presented at the end of the
14 summer, last summer. Those recommendations are
15 available on the ESD Project website.

16 ESD staff intends to propose these revisions,
17 as well as other revisions that may arise as a result
18 of public comments received during this review
19 process, to the ESD Directors for their consideration
20 in determining whether they should affirm -- affirm
21 this modification or withdraw the GPP.

22 This slide lays out key highlights of ESD's
23 staff's proposed revisions to the draft GPP.
24 Specifically, the proposed total density in the
25 project area would be reduced by about 1.4 million

2 gross square feet, which is equivalent to eliminating
3 one super tall building from the plan. The proposed
4 revisions would increase housing opportunities
5 requiring at least one residential building with
6 approximately 540 units, of which 162 would be
7 permanently affordable, and permitting up to a total
8 of about 1,800 residential units across four sites,
9 of which 540 would be permanently affordable.

10 The proposed revisions would also increase
11 public space in the project area and establish a
12 cross jurisdictional public realm task force and fund
13 modeled on the East Midtown Rezoning Public Realm
14 Fund Governing group.

15 With respect to transit access, the proposed
16 revisions would include two options for a train hall
17 on Site 2 or Block 780 if Penn Station does end up
18 expanding into this public.

19 One option would be to locate a train hall in
20 the midblock between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, and
21 the other would place it on Seventh Avenue. These
22 two options allow for flexibility as the railroad's
23 planning for the potential explaining of all. The
24 proposed revisions would also include two options for
25 a below-grade pedestrian concourse system to

2 alleviate sidewalk congestion by connecting Penn
3 Station to nearby subway stations, including Herald
4 Square and north to 34th Street.

5 The proposed revisions also include stricter
6 design controls that would foster active diversified
7 street frontages and encourage small business
8 tenancy, lower building base heights along Eighth
9 Avenue and prioritized views of the Empire State
10 Building along a more pedestrian-friendly West 33rd
11 Street.

12 Finally, the proposed revisions would mandate
13 requirements for greener buildings, including that
14 all building be built to be fully electric and would
15 include labor and MWBE commitments for project
16 construction.

17 The following two slides show comparison of
18 isometric views of the development that would occur
19 under the original draft GPP and the proposed
20 revisions, with commercial use shown in light blue,
21 hotel use in orange, residential in red and community
22 facility in pink. The equivalent floor area ratios
23 are indicated for the buildings on Sites 1, 2 and 3.

24 We'll toggle between the draft GPP, which is
25 what's showing right now, and the proposed revisions

2 to illustrate the differences.

3 If the proposed revisions are incorporated
4 into the final GPP, no site would exceed the
5 equivalent of 30 FAR, and the density on Sites 1 and
6 2 would be substantially reduced and reconfigured to
7 step down from the east to the west. As mentioned,
8 the proposed revisions would permit up to 1,800
9 residential units in four buildings across three
10 sites.

11 Both buildings on Site 1, Sites 4 and 8 would
12 require that the midblock low-rise building on Site
13 1, which is shown here in the lower left of the
14 image, would be residential rental with a community
15 facility space on the ground floor. The proposed
16 revisions would also require that 30 percent of all
17 residential units, or about 540 units, would be
18 permanently affordable.

19 The proposed revisions would increase public
20 space in the project area even more than the draft
21 GPP did by imposing a public space requirement on
22 each site and recommending that the New York City DOT
23 consider making 31st Street between Seventh and
24 Eighth Avenues a shared street.

25 This would be in addition to shared streets

2 on 32nd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues and
3 33rd Street all the way from Sixth and Ninth Avenue.
4 This slide shows the conceptual rendering of the
5 proposed pedestrian-friendly shared 33rd Street,
6 looking eastward from Ninth Avenue.

7 In total, the proposed revisions, which
8 facilitate the creation of about 8 acres of public
9 space in the form of new plazas and open space,
10 including a 30,000-square-foot public plaza
11 comparable to Rockefeller Plaza, which is shown in
12 this slide. Sidewalk widening, shared streets and
13 new in-building transit entrances that would remove
14 subway entrances from crowded sidewalks.

15 If the plan is approved, ESD would launch the
16 before-mentioned public realm task force. It would
17 develop a concept plan that would prioritize public
18 realm improvements and guiding principles for public
19 realm design. The public realm task force would
20 comprise representatives of involved state and city
21 agencies, local elected officials, community boards
22 and civic organizations. A public realm fund funded
23 in part by the proposed redevelopment would pay for
24 the proposed improvements.

25 Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the proposed

2 revisions would include two options for a below-grade
3 pedestrian concourse. This slide shows one of those
4 options in orange with an east-west connection
5 between Penn Station and Herald Square Station along
6 West 33rd Street.

7 The other option would locate this connection
8 one block south along West 32nd Street. The final
9 EIS will study both of these options, and the MTA
10 will ultimately determine which to implement.

11 The proposed project would also provide 18
12 new, highly-visible, in-building entrances to Penn
13 Station and area subway stations, helping alleviate
14 pinchpoints that occur at entries and making it much
15 easier for travelers and commuters to find Penn
16 Station. Other improvements to subway stations would
17 include stair and platform widening and new elevators
18 and escalators.

19 What I've given you is a very brief summary
20 of the original draft GPP and ESD's staff proposed
21 revisions in response to the community feedback. I
22 encourage you to review the proposed revisions in
23 more detail on the ESD project website.

24 With that overview, I will now hand the
25 presentation over to Conner Lacefield from AKRF, the

2 lead consultant supporting ESD in the preparation of
3 the project's EIS.

4 MR. LACEFIELD: Thank you, Holly. Good
5 evening, everyone.

6 My name is Conner Lacefield, and I'm a senior
7 Technical Director at AKRF. I'm serving as the
8 project manager for ESD's consultant team for the
9 Environmental Impact Statement or EIS. I'm going to
10 provide a very brief summary of the contents of the
11 draft EIS, which analyze the project as originally
12 proposed. I will then review some of the notable
13 updates that will be presented in the final EIS,
14 which will include an analysis of potential impacts
15 of the project with the proposed revisions that Holly
16 summarized.

17 The draft EIS describes the proposed project
18 and assesses its potential for environmental impacts
19 in a full range of analysis areas. The draft EIS
20 identifies significant adverse impacts in several
21 analysis areas, indicated in blue on this slide.
22 These include open-space shadows, historic and
23 cultural resources, visual resources, transportation,
24 noise and construction.

25 As required by SEQRA, the draft EIS

2 identifies practicable mitigation measures to
3 eliminate or reduce the identified significant
4 adverse impacts. However, not all impacts can be
5 fully mitigated. We invite you to review the full
6 draft EIS, which is available on ESD's website, for
7 more information. ESD is continuing to explore and
8 refine additional mitigation measures for inclusion
9 in the final EIS.

10 As Holly mentioned earlier, after the
11 issuance of the draft EIS, ESD worked closely with
12 the project's community advisory committee and its
13 larger working group to rethink aspects of the
14 proposed project. This effort resulted in the
15 proposed revisions that were summarized earlier. The
16 final EIS will study these proposed revisions where
17 appropriate and update the analyses as needed to
18 reflect the revisions.

19 This slide summarizes some of the notable
20 revisions that we expect to make in the final EIS.
21 The final EIS will study the reduced density, lower
22 building heights and residential uses of the proposed
23 revisions. New and updated views of the Empire State
24 Buildings will be presented in the final EIS visual
25 resources analysis. The transportation analysis will

2 have several updates, including further assessment of
3 the below-grade concourse options, a qualitative
4 assessment of the proposed West 31st Street shared
5 street and analysis of pedestrian elements on Ninth
6 Avenue and West 31st and West 33rd Streets.

7 The final EIS will account for ongoing
8 historic resources consultation, and identification
9 of new state and national register eligible
10 properties in and around the project area. The final
11 EIS will also update the analysis years as
12 appropriate and will account for changes in new
13 information regarding other planned development
14 projects in the future, no action condition,
15 including the nearby Macy's proposal, as appropriate.

16 Finally, shown here are the email and mailing
17 addresses for providing comments on the GPP, draft
18 EIS and proposed revisions. And a reminder that the
19 close of the comment period will be at 5:00 p.m. on
20 February 22nd, 2022.

21 Thank you for your time, and we look forward
22 to hearing your comments. I'd like to now hand this
23 back to Celeste.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you, Conner.

25 I'd like to note again that the proposed GPP

2 and the draft EIS for the proposed project are
3 available on ESD's website at:
4 [Https://esd.ny.gov/penn-station-area](https://esd.ny.gov/penn-station-area). That's also
5 visible on your screen.

6 To inspect or obtain copies of the GPP, the
7 revisions proposed by ESD staff and the DEIS from
8 ESD, please call area code (212)803-2477 or email
9 pennstationarea@esd.ny.gov.

10 Or the original email address for the
11 project: empirestation@esd.ny.gov.

12 Copies of the General Project Plan have been
13 filed in the offices of the New York City -- city and
14 county clerks and have been provided to the mayor of
15 the City of New York, the Manhattan borough
16 president, the chair of the New York City Planning
17 Commission, and the chairs of Manhattan Community
18 Boards Number 4 and 5. Copies of the notice of
19 completion with the link to the DEIS have been
20 provided to all involved agencies and to other
21 parties, as required under SEQRA.

22 Before we begin the testimony portion of this
23 hearing, I'll, once again, share instructions for
24 those who wish to view the meeting with American Sign
25 Language interpretation.

2 If you signed up -- excuse me. If you signed
3 up to speak before the hearing during the
4 registration process, we have your name. You will be
5 called during the testimony portion of this hearing.
6 You do not need to raise your hand again. If you did
7 not sign up to speak before the start of the hearing
8 but would like to provide verbal testimony, please
9 identify yourself using the raise hand function on
10 Zoom. Instructions for this are being shown on your
11 screen now and will be shown periodically during the
12 hearing.

13 If you're joining us this evening by phone
14 only, you may dial *9 on your keypad to indicate your
15 desire to provide testimony. Participants using the
16 "raise hand" function on Zoom or *9 will be added to
17 the speaker list. The option to sign up to speak
18 will end at 7:30 p.m.

19 Please note that we will make every effort to
20 prioritize those speakers who did not already provide
21 verbal testimony at the first hearing on December 8th
22 and to honor the order in which participants
23 registered to speak. Those who registered early in
24 the -- will be sooner in the order of speakers and
25 those that registered more recently will be towards

2 the end of our speaker list.

3 At this time, there are more than 250
4 participants on our speaker list who have registered
5 to speak at this hearing. Due to this high level of
6 interest, we anticipate the public testimony portion
7 of this hearing extending until late tonight. We
8 thank you for your patience in advance and ask that
9 all speakers are prepared to speak when your name is
10 called. Each speaker will be allotted three minutes
11 to provide their testimony here tonight. If you
12 prefer to provide written comments, those may be
13 submitted via email and mail. They do not have a
14 link limit, and we'll be given the same consideration
15 as comments delivered verbally tonight.

16 The chat function on Zoom will not be enabled
17 for this meeting. If you're in need of technical
18 support please direct inquiries to the email address
19 at the bottom of the instruction slides,
20 help@publicworkspartners.com.

21 This may include requesting information about
22 your place in the order of speakers. Note this is
23 not the email address to submit your testimony. That
24 email address is: Pennstationarea@ESD.NY.GOV.

25 I'll begin the testimony by calling the names

2 of those who registered to speak or the first and
3 last three digits of your phone number if you're
4 using the telephone dial in option, not the Zoom app.
5 Elected officials will be provided the courtesy of
6 speaking first, as will community board district
7 managers or chairs and representatives of a
8 government agency who did not already provide
9 testimony at the first public hearing.

10 Periodically, you will see a list of the next
11 ten speakers on your screen so that you can prepare
12 for your turn to speak. When your name or the first
13 and last three digits of your phone number is called,
14 you will be asked to unmute yourself and will make
15 sure you're ready before starting the time clock.
16 You can scroll or swipe to see the time clock on your
17 screen to remind you of the length of time left for
18 your testimony. When three minutes have passed, your
19 audio will be muted and you will be invited to send
20 any remaining comments to ESD's mailing or email
21 address. Please state your name and affiliation, if
22 you have one, for the record when you start your
23 testimony.

24 As a reminder, this is a public hearing for
25 the Penn Station Area Redevelopment Project. We

2 encourage all speakers to focus their comments to the
3 GPP, Draft Environmental Impact Statement and
4 proposed revisions for this project.

5 We also ask that the speakers exercise civil
6 conduct during your testimony. Speakers using
7 inappropriate language will be muted and cautioned
8 before being allowed to continue. Please also be
9 reminded that this is not a Q-and-A session.

10 Also note that we'll be taking a ten-minute
11 break after the first 90 minutes of testimony and
12 approximately every 90 minutes thereafter.

13 As noted earlier, the entire ESD project team
14 is here with us this evening to hear your testimony.

15 Before we begin with our registered speakers,
16 we'd first like to welcome several elected officials
17 and government representatives who will speak in just
18 one moment.

19 Our first speaker will be Erik Bottcher.

20 Erik Bottcher, you may begin.

21 MR. BOTTCHEER: Hello, can you hear me?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, you can go ahead.

23 MR. BOTTCHEER: Good evening. My name is
24 Erik Bottcher, Council Member Erik Bottcher for
25 District 3; and, tonight, I'm submitting written

2 testimony from me and my fellow elected public
3 officials, and I'm going to make some remarks of my
4 own as well.

5 This testimony that was previously submitted
6 by U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler, Carolyn Maloney,
7 former Borough President Gale Brewer, State Senators
8 Brad Hoylman and Robert Jackson and Assembly Member
9 Richard Gottfried and current Manhattan Borough
10 President Mark Levine, and I have signed on to this
11 testimony.

12 I'm going to read the introduction of this
13 testimony and just highlight some quick points, what
14 I think are some points in it, and I will give some
15 thoughts of my own at the end. I'm going to begin by
16 reading the beginning of this testimony:

17 We appreciate the opportunity to submit
18 comments regarding the General Project Plan to the
19 Pennsylvania Station Area Civic and Land Use
20 Improvement Project. Our districts, which cover Penn
21 Station and the neighborhoods around it including the
22 proposed expansion and development areas, have seen
23 some enormous growth in residential and commercial
24 development and the associated congestion in our
25 transit system and in our streets over the last two

2 decades. The increase in scale and density of
3 Manhattan's west side as a result of the zoning and
4 development has lead to a dramatic increase in the
5 number of people who live and work around Penn
6 Station and who rely on this transit hub.

7 Empire Station Community Advisory Committee
8 working group released its initial response to ESD's
9 GPP for Pennsylvania Station and surrounding areas in
10 August. That report reflected input from two town
11 halls, a series of ten issue-focused meetings over
12 the course of 14 weeks, ranging from transportation
13 to financing to public space, the significant
14 engagement and support from ESD, the MTA and Amtrak
15 on the technical details of the proposal.

16 So now we're going to highlight a few key
17 points for this written testimony that I'm
18 submitting: affordable housing and density. There's
19 still too much office space. With commercial vacancy
20 rates nearing 20 percent and unused office space at
21 World Trade and Hudson Yards prepandemic, more office
22 space is not what we need. With this level of
23 density, there must be increased residential zoning,
24 including mandatory affordable and supportive housing
25 on sites 4 through 8.

2 Public realm. Coordinated public realm
3 improvements should be the center piece of this plan
4 and the creation of the task force that would help
5 ensure that occurs.

6 Train hall. The largest -- New York's
7 largest transportation hub should represent the city.
8 If Madison Square Garden is not moved to a more
9 appropriate site, allowing for the construction of a
10 train hall in its stead, we remain advocates of the
11 large avenue-facing train hall.

12 Social services. The area in and around Penn
13 Station has a high quantity of unhoused individuals
14 and illegal substance use. The solution is not to
15 make the improved Penn Station inhospitable to our
16 unhoused residents, but to use a redevelopment as an
17 opportunity to rectify the injustices in our own
18 backyard to provide supportive housing for unhoused
19 neighbors and substantial space for social service
20 providers to provide job incentives, health services,
21 addiction treatment, job training and more.

22 Below grade coordination. As belowground
23 track work progresses, there must be coordination
24 with regard to the aboveground station improvement.
25 Proposals must have public review. As previously

2 requested, there should be one agency that leads to
3 implementation and the overall integrated plan for
4 the project director who coordinates all agency and
5 developers involved, as was done for the rebuilding
6 of Lower Manhattan.

7 Local hiring of -- provision to explore local
8 hiring agreements during construction in partnership
9 with local building trades to be included in any
10 plan.

11 So that's just some of the written testimony
12 that's submitted for the record. And I want to add a
13 couple of thoughts:

14 Why are we adding millions of square feet of
15 office space and so little housing while we're in the
16 biggest housing crunch in generations? As of October
17 last year, there were over 48,000 New Yorkers living
18 in our shelters including 15,000 homeless children,
19 sleeping each night in New York City's shelter
20 system.

21 The current plan provides for a maximum of
22 540 affordable units. Is that the best we can do?
23 This is an opportunity for thousands of units of
24 affordable housing at all income points from
25 supportive housing to middle income housing, we need

2 large numbers of affordable housing, and it must be
3 guaranteed as part of the new projects.

4 Regarding what kind of Penn Station is being
5 proposed, you know, I've seen the renderings of the
6 proposed improved Penn Station; and, yes, I know that
7 they are theoretical because there are very few of
8 the details that are worked out. But based on what I
9 see, do we really think that that's the new Penn
10 Station that we all need and deserve as New Yorkers?

11 Should we not attempt to recreate at least
12 some of the majesty of the original Pennsylvania
13 Station? The proposals that I've seen do not do
14 that.

15 And, furthermore, will we ever truly get the
16 train hall that we need and deserve as long as
17 Madison Square Garden is sitting on top of it? When
18 I'm in the lower concourse of the LIRR, my head
19 nearly touches the ceiling. That's the undervalley
20 of MSG. We're severely limited as to what we can do;
21 and in my view, the efforts to relocate MSG have been
22 half-hearted. We need a true effort to relocate MSG
23 that must be undertaken if we're ever going to get
24 the world-class train hall which we truly deserve.
25 Thank you very much.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 Our next speaker will be Assembly Member
5 Gina Sillitti.

6 MS. SILLITTI: Good evening, everyone.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good even.

8 MS. SILLITTI: Good evening. Thank you for
9 hosting. My name is Gina Sillitti, I'm a member of
10 the New York State Assembly. I just want to first
11 thank you for this presentation, for hosting this
12 hearing, and you're going to be here very late into
13 the night, but it's important -- it's important that
14 you hear from everyone. I think some of this
15 testimony is probably going to be a little bit
16 intense; but like I said, we need to hear from
17 everyone. But I'm going to be quick so we can hear
18 from the public.

19 So I represent a commuter district. I do not
20 represent people who live in and around Penn Station,
21 so I'm going to focus on them. And having a
22 transportation hub that is clean, safe, updated is a
23 priority for me. So I appreciate this investment and
24 the investment Governor Hochul is making to Penn
25 Station, but we want to make sure it's done right, of

2 course.

3 You know, I want our commuters to have a
4 great experience, and I know that you all do, too,
5 and that this project will, at the end of the day,
6 enhance the experience for all Long Islanders who
7 visit the city, whether they're here for business or
8 pleasure.

9 I did have some more prepared remarks, but I
10 think it's too important to get going to some of the
11 other folks and hear what they have to say. I'm
12 going to stay on for awhile because I want to hear
13 what the public has to say. So, again, thank you for
14 hosting, and thank you for including me today.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you very much,
16 Assembly Member.

17 Our next speaker -- our next registered
18 speaker is New York City Public Advocate
19 Jumaane Williams or perhaps someone prepared to speak
20 on the public advocate's behalf. No, we'll revisit
21 that if need be.

22 Our next speaker will be Samuel Goodman, who
23 is speaking on behalf of the Borough President
24 Vanessa Gibson.

25 MR. GOODMAN: Good evening. My name is

2 Sam Goodman, and I'm hoping you can hear me. Can
3 you, in fact, hear me?

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

5 MR. GOODMAN: Okay. Great.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yep. We can hear you.
7 You can go ahead.

8 MR. GOODMAN: Excellent. Thank you so much
9 for this opportunity to testify in favor of the Penn
10 Station Area Civic and Land Use Improvement project.

11 I'm representing the newly-elected borough
12 president, Vanessa Gibson. And on her behalf as the
13 incoming borough president, I feel it is incumbent on
14 me to voice my support for this project because it's
15 not only very important for the entire northeastern
16 seaboard, it will have a major positive impact,
17 economic and social impact, on Bronx residents living
18 in transit deserts whose needs have been ignored for
19 far too long.

20 With the adoption of this General Project
21 Plan, the State of New York will have a path to
22 securing the resources needed to transform Penn
23 Station, the busiest transit hub in the nation, to
24 implement much-needed transit improvements for
25 commuters. Most importantly, this plan will

2 accomplish all of this while balancing the needs of
3 the surrounding community and the region.

4 As Metro-North expands its presence at Penn
5 Station, riders from the east Bronx will have the
6 opportunity to travel by rail directly and
7 conveniently into the west side of Manhattan and
8 substantially cut their commuting time. As a result,
9 Bronxites will greatly increase their access to jobs
10 as well as civic and cultural institutions.

11 Additionally, it is expected that this
12 project, along with the associated railroad projects,
13 will create 50,000 good-paying construction jobs,
14 jobs that I strongly urge be made available to Bronx
15 residents as part of the local -- local hiring goals.
16 This is an opportunity to plan for the long -- for
17 the long-term growth and health of our city region
18 and my borough, the Bronx. And I support this
19 project and look forward to seeing its eventual
20 construction.

21 Thank you all very much for considering my
22 remarks. I, again, am Sam Goodman, representing
23 Bronx borough president, Vanessa Gibson.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

2 So at this time, we'll proceed with our list
3 of registered speakers. If there are any elected
4 officials, community board district managers or
5 chairs or representatives of government agencies that
6 wish to give comment, they'll be inserted into the
7 speaker order later.

8 So our first cohort of speakers will include:
9 Pamela Wolff;
10 Joseph Urso;
11 Michael Piccirillo;
12 Marilyn Taylor;
13 Matthias Hess;
14 Elizabeth Goldstein;
15 Christopher Larsen;
16 Vishaan Chakrabarti;
17 Diana Stewart;
18 Erica Petersen.

19 So if you are on that list of ten speakers,
20 you will speak in the first group of ten. And so at
21 this time we will begin with our first speaker --
22 excuse me just a moment. I'm sorry.

23 We have one additional speaker from the
24 elected officials or community boards, and that
25 person is Charles Lavine -- excuse me -- Pamela

2 Wolff. I'm sorry. You'll go next, I think.

3 Assemblyman Charles Lavine will speak now,
4 and then we'll move into our registered speaker list.

5 Assembly Member, you may go ahead. Your
6 audio is still muted. Assembly Member, if you
7 could -- yep.

8 MR. LAVINE: Thank you, Celeste; and sorry,
9 Pamela.

10 My name is Charles Lavine, and I have the
11 great honor and privilege of representing northeast
12 Nassau County in the New York State Assembly. I am
13 also, in full disclosure, someone who rode the Long
14 Island Railroad and took the subways for many, many
15 years. I'm one of the millions of riders of -- who
16 take advantage of our transportation system.

17 The envy of the world, our transportation
18 system is the lifeblood of our entire community.
19 It's indispensable to our economic future. The
20 metropolitan region is the economic driver of not
21 only the State of New York, but the tri-state area
22 and the entire United States of America.

23 So a new and better Penn Station is a
24 tremendous win for everyone, including the Long
25 Island commuters that I represent and that I once

2 was. A new Penn Station will make traveling to the
3 city a better experience for everyone and will
4 encourage people to use public transportation, giving
5 New Yorkers the experience that we all deserve. A
6 better Penn Station will make it easier for those who
7 engage in reverse commuting, giving Long Island
8 businesses a new pool of talent to recruit and
9 creating new job opportunities for more New Yorkers.

10 So I thank you for the opportunity to speak
11 on this critically important issue. And as you, I
12 think, already know, I fully endorse the Penn Station
13 Area Civic and Land Use Improvement Project. Thank
14 you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

15 And, Pamela, sorry, but it's your turn now.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you, Assembly
17 Member.

18 Pamela Wolff, yes. You -- you may begin your
19 testimony. Unmute your audio and turn your video on
20 and start when you're ready.

21 MS. WOLFF: Well, there we go. Well, good
22 evening, everyone, and thank you. I feel honored to
23 be the first member of the public to be given the
24 opportunity to speak tonight. My name is
25 Pamela Wolff, and I'm the president of Save Chelsea.

2 I'm speaking here tonight on behalf of
3 Lynn Ellsworth, reading testimony from Empire Station
4 Coalition.

5 The project documents suggest discriminatory
6 intent toward people who are not of the gentry class.
7 The ESD complains on page 62 of the neighborhood
8 conditions study that the project area "has the
9 highest proportion of local earning less than \$40,000
10 annually at 52 percent."

11 The report goes on to inform readers that a
12 greater percentage of higher salaried workers can be
13 found in the Grand Central or World Trade Center
14 area. The logical implication is that the presence
15 of low-income workers now constitutes "blight"
16 conditions.

17 Where are such workers expected to go? Our
18 working class people to just leave the city and be
19 replaced with White and Asian Facebook employees.
20 Recall that Vornado now rents to Facebook in the
21 Farley Square post office and brags frequently of
22 this fact to its shareholders. Is this not an
23 example of classist and racist thinking on the part
24 of ESD and its client, Vornado?

25 Note that 41 percent of Facebook's employees

2 are white and 44 percent are Asian, fewer than
3 4 percent are Black, while about 25 percent of New
4 Yorkers are Black.

5 Moreover, Vornado's CEO tells his shareholder
6 that he plans hundreds of thousands of square feet of
7 private amenities within his buildings for his
8 high-end tenant. This follows a fashionable trend
9 among developers, to create in their high-rises a new
10 kind of anti-urban gated community within each
11 building. The idea is to create interior "amenities"
12 so that highly salaried people won't have to leave
13 their building to eat, go bowling, taste fine wines,
14 see a movie, play golf, enjoy an art collection or
15 walk their dog. Since when is this kind of planned
16 hypergentrification and big real estate speculative
17 game a legitimate strategy for a public agency like
18 the ESD.

19 Thank you very much.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 At this time, we'll invite another assembly
23 member, I believe -- yes, Assembly Member
24 Nathalia Fernandez to give brief remarks.

25 Hi, Assembly Member. You may go ahead when

2 you've ready.

3 MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you so much. Thank you
4 for allowing me to testify tonight in support of the
5 Penn Station Area Civic and Land Use Improvement
6 project.

7 I am Assembly Member Nathalia Fernandez, and
8 I represent the 80th Assembly District in the Bronx.
9 The community I represent has long suffered from
10 limited access to transit options and painfully long
11 commutes into Manhattan. We welcome the new Metro
12 North line, of which two of the proposed stations
13 will be in my district, Morris Park and Van
14 Nest/Parkchester. They will go directly into Penn
15 Station, significantly reducing commute time for
16 residents of Eastern Bronx. But the current station,
17 as we know, does not meet the needs of those
18 commuting there currently, much less the additional
19 commuters that will be traveling there once the new
20 line is up and running.

21 The transit and pedestrian infrastructure in
22 and out of Penn Station is untenable. New Yorkers
23 should not be subjected to today's cramped, crowded
24 dangerous conditions as they traverse through our
25 great city for work and recreation.

2 If approved, the general project will
3 generate funds to overhaul Penn Station and will
4 improve the streets and neighborhood around the
5 station. It will spark robust economic activity for
6 the region and provide the critical investments
7 needed to enhance the transit infrastructure and
8 public realm, prioritizing pedestrian and pedestrian
9 traffic and transform Penn Station into a world-class
10 transit facility that is easy to navigate and can
11 accommodate Penn's future growth.

12 It is critical that this plan be approved and
13 that Penn's Station transformational station begin in
14 anticipation for the new four Bronx Metro North
15 stations, one of which, again, will be in Morris Park
16 and Van Nest/Parkchester, so that Bronx residents and
17 all commuters traveling to and from the region are
18 provided with quick and reliable unencumbered
19 commutes they deserve. Thank you.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 And now we will continue with our list of
23 registered speakers. Our next speaker will be
24 Joseph Urso.

25 Joseph Urso, you may unmute your audio and

2 turn on your video and let us know when you're ready
3 to begin.

4 MR. URSO: Hello. I don't know if I have my
5 camerate ready. Can you hear me?

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear you.
7 You can go ahead.

8 MR. URSO: Great. I wish to express, first
9 and foremost, that my concern rests on the scope of
10 aboveground work. This area has been suffocating
11 over the past 60 years under the delusions of
12 developers and planners alike that new building is
13 always better.

14 This project as a means to improve Penn
15 Station is a complete lie. I do not support this
16 plan at all, and neither should anybody else. Based
17 on what I've seen, this project, if it is pushed
18 through, is going to be very destructive to the Penn
19 Station area. Penn Station does not need a myriad of
20 new, super-tall office towers to improve it,
21 especially when the majority of newly proposed
22 buildings will not benefit the station in any way.

23 Vornado Real Estate Trust is deliberately
24 mismanaging existing buildings to run them into the
25 ground in order to gain support for a land grab

2 opportunity to build more office space that will
3 benefit literally no one but the interests of Vornado
4 and its stakeholders.

5 That are historic and cultural assets,
6 communities, businesses, and neighborhoods at stake
7 here. All of which will be displaced and destroyed
8 permanently if this plan is pushed through. It is
9 the -- is this really essential to the lifeblood of
10 New York, to displace these residents and destroy
11 perfectly functional buildings for new towers which
12 will be 90 percent office use?

13 During the urban renewal movement, the
14 protestors against the demolition of Penn Station
15 were seen as a minority of ridiculous, starry-eyed
16 nostalgists. And we recognize what a mistake this
17 was only after it was too late. And, frankly, these
18 nostalgists have been proven right over the past half
19 century as we have worked in vain to compensate for
20 an irretrievable loss.

21 Office towers are hardly a suitable
22 replacement for the ensemble of built and culture
23 fabric worthy of preservation in this vital area of
24 the city. An Empire Station Complex will be better
25 served by buildings of various uses and various ages

2 with publicly accessible areas that give the public
3 different reasons to flock here throughout the day,
4 rather than a uniform district of steel and glass
5 boxes only to be used from 9 to 5.

6 Madison Square Garden also needs to be
7 addressed. Its lease is up in 2023, which is a
8 ten-year extension from 2013, in which it was given
9 time to find a place to relocate. Why has this
10 urgency waned over the past decade? Why we are now
11 facing a proposal to needlessly level the entire
12 neighborhood around Madison Square Garden, when it is
13 Madison Square Garden that is sole cause of this
14 problem?

15 I highly recommend we scrap this monstrous
16 plan and develop one that aims to move Madison Square
17 Garden and bring Penn Station back above ground once
18 and for all, the way it was meant to be.

19 Thank you very much. I appreciate --

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Our next speaker will be Michael Piccirillo.

23 MR. PICCIRILLO: Good evening, everyone. My
24 name is Michael Piccirillo. I'm a proud member of the
25 New York City Council of Carpenters.

2 I've been working as a general construction
3 carpenter. Basically, what my expertise was was
4 interiors for the last 20 years. I'm proud of the
5 work that I've done to shape the city we live in
6 today. Through labor, we have some of New York's
7 most important projects, you know. I worked on the
8 Trade Center, I worked at the Hudson Yards, you know,
9 all over the city.

10 The last two years we've been -- have been
11 incredibly tough on the construction trades industry
12 as the pandemic has slowed countless projects across
13 the city. It has dealt a terrible blow to union
14 workers across the five boroughs and beyond, with
15 negative impacts the longer we stall major projects.

16 The New York City Building Congress recently
17 issued a report that shows that construction
18 employment will remain at its lowest point in New
19 York City since 2014, for the remainder of 2021.

20 Governor Hochul's proposal will breathe new
21 life not only into Penn Station and the surrounding
22 district, but also for the construction industry and
23 the thousands of union workers who rely on inspiring
24 game-changing projects needed to support their
25 families across New York. The GPP as envisioned is a

2 much-needed investment in union workers like myself,
3 demonstrating that New York is built with labor.

4 New York City is the greatest city in the
5 world, and I hope you all join me in supporting a
6 brighter future for the city that we call home. We
7 must continue to invest in projects like Penn Station
8 that will continue to make the city a better place.
9 I'm proud to join my brothers and sisters of the New
10 York City District Council of Carpenters in support
11 of revitalizing Penn Station. And thank you.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Our next speaker will be Marilyn Taylor.

15 Marilyn Taylor, you may unmute your video and
16 audio -- audio and video and get ready to speak.

17 Hi, Marilyn. We can see you. Yep, I think
18 you're ready to start.

19 MS. TAYLOR: Yes, is it -- can you hear me as
20 well?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

22 MS. TAYLOR: Thank you so much. I'm
23 Marilyn Taylor, an architect, urban designer and a
24 member of the Community Advisory Committee for the
25 General Project Plan in the Penn Station area.

2 Over my several decades of practice in New
3 York City, I had the privilege of working with
4 Senators Moynihan, Clinton, Schumann, as well as
5 city, state and community leaders to envision a new
6 Penn Station.

7 The Moynihan Train Hall and the related
8 development of the Farley post office site can be
9 seen as the first successful steps in achieving a new
10 and better experience at our station and for the
11 surrounding communities.

12 I deeply commend the shifts being made by
13 Governor Hochul and her team to prioritize the
14 revisioning of the existing Penn Station and to
15 emphasize the importance of the public realm making
16 changes to the previously-proposed plan to better
17 integrate with communities, while still advancing
18 plans for additional train capacity and related
19 private developments.

20 And, certainly, I thank the ESD team for its
21 patience and its leadership in this process. As you
22 can probably tell, I strongly support the goals and
23 strategies of the revised general project plan.

24 In my short time, I want to shine a spotlight
25 on three issues: Climate action, the public realm

2 and leadership.

3 Climate change. Of all of the
4 responsibilities that this project must embrace, none
5 is more important than the challenge of achieving
6 decarbonization. Critical reductions in the use of
7 carbon must be advanced now to meet the goals for
8 2025, 2030 and 2050. New York City is already a
9 leader in requiring energy use measurements by
10 building and proposes fines for excessive energy use.

11 The Penn Station area must be designed to
12 build and operated to anticipate the needs to achieve
13 net zero in the decades ahead. Simply pursuing gold
14 and platinum scores will not get us there.

15 Second, the public realm. The success of
16 this project will depend heavily on the character and
17 quality of the public realm that will tie several
18 very large infrastructure projects together with the
19 everyday life of the neighboring communities. The
20 public realm creates the essential shared experiences
21 that make the Penn Station area a place of welcoming
22 and inclusive spaces, indoors and out, above grade
23 and below.

24 It must include not only streets and
25 sidewalks, but also the train station halls, the

2 connecting passages, the subways, buses, on-demand
3 vehicles and ground floor activities on both public
4 and private investment sites. This --

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten-second warning.

6 MS. TAYLOR: -- can be the territory in which
7 this project will succeed or fail.

8 I strongly propose the proposal to create a
9 process through which the specifics of the public
10 realm will be advanced offer the next year.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great. I'm sorry,
12 Marilyn, but your time is, up and we need to move to
13 the next speakers. You may submit your testimony in
14 writing to the -- the email or mailing addresses.
15 Thank you.

16 Our next speaker will be Matthias Hess.

17 Matthias Hess, you may unmute your audio and
18 prepare to speak.

19 MR. HESS: Hi, can you hear me?

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can. You may
21 go ahead.

22 MR. HESS: Great. My name is Matthias Hess,
23 I'm a resident of New York City, and I strongly
24 oppose the plan for a Hudson Yards-style
25 redevelopment project around Penn Station. I was

2 shocked to learn what the destruction would mean for
3 the neighborhood. It would displace residents,
4 businesses, and destroy more than 40 historic
5 buildings.

6 I strongly support efforts to improve Penn
7 Station and the surrounding public environment but
8 not plans to destroy the urban fabric of the
9 neighborhood. I would urge the planners to look at
10 alternatives such as have been proposed by the Empire
11 Station Coalition, which would dramatically improve
12 the capacity at Penn Station within its existing
13 footprint by improving operations with through
14 running.

15 I also support the idea to open up the
16 station to light and air and even possibly rebuild
17 the building that was destroyed in 1963. A good plan
18 for the station will preserve and adapt the historic
19 buildings around the neighborhood to attract a new
20 generation of commercial and residential uses, such
21 as we've seen at Moynihan Train Hall where the Farley
22 post office is already serving railroad commuters
23 with dignity and will also house office space for
24 Facebook. This is the kind of spaces and demands
25 unlike new office buildings.

2 Finally, the project must follow New York
3 City's zoning and land use laws, and there must be
4 adequate public outreach and input. I'm amazed at
5 the number of people who would be affected by the
6 project and are only just learning about it or don't
7 know about it yet.

8 So to summarize, yes to transit improvements
9 and no to large-scale destruction of the
10 neighborhood. Thank you very much.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Our next speaker will be Elizabeth Goldstein.

14 MS. GOLDSTEIN: Good evening. I'm
15 Elizabeth Goldstein. I'm the president of the
16 Municipal Arts Society, and I speak largely tonight
17 as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee. We
18 will be submitting, as an organization, extensive
19 comments in the written form shortly. But I wanted
20 to concentrate on a couple of critical points this
21 evening:

22 We have a very specific narrow window to
23 solve one of the forniest problems in New York City
24 in the region and that that moment is now. We have
25 relative lull at Penn Station, and it will not come

2 again. East Side Access will reduce use of Penn as
3 Moynihan Station has, and then Penn Access and the
4 completion of Gateway will push that use back up.

5 New Yorkers must not lose the opportunity of
6 federal funding for existing Penn that will be
7 available now potentially for a very short political
8 window. The public benefits of this project,
9 however, must come first, i.e., a highly integrated,
10 high-functioning train station and a sophisticated,
11 attractive and effective public realm.

12 What do I mean by that? I mean a strong
13 presence for the station on Seventh and Eighth Avenue
14 and integrated public realm that prioritizes access
15 to Penn Station from Herald Square and really to the
16 east and Ninth Avenue on the west. And the secondary
17 underground system of welcoming connections that
18 maximize accessibility, circulation and desire lines.

19 We need a single compelling master plan, and
20 very soon that includes all of the transit projects
21 underway that will make or break Penn Station and the
22 broader district needs. That means Gateway, Penn
23 Extension, Penn Station the public realm, Madison
24 Square Garden, subway stations and Moynihan Train
25 Hall.

2 Our window for deep creativity and problem
3 solving is now. And it will not get greater later;
4 it will close. It is essential to have all the
5 transit agencies coordinate and buy into the process
6 collectively. But it is also important that there be
7 buy-ins from a myriad of other stakeholders as well.

8 The CAP and wag planning process that was
9 done has done an excellent job in educating key
10 stakeholders about the potential for the station and
11 the district, and I appreciate the responsiveness
12 that ESD has shown to many of the recommendations
13 that the CAP and wag have made.

14 However, FFX collaborative studies for Penn
15 Station demonstrate that we could create a station
16 that has wide concourses and high ceilings and good
17 wayfinding. But, it is not the single compelling
18 master plan that I referred to above. The WXY
19 studies of the district show how we could create a
20 compelling inspiring public realm. The proposal to
21 create a public realm task force is important
22 progress in this regard.

23 Governor Hochul's proposal for stakeholder
24 group -- for the stakeholder group is impressive, we
25 need to see evidence of that proposal and that it

2 takes route and makes progress.

3 Thank you for the considerable work that has
4 been done. There is much that remains. Thank you
5 for the opportunity to testify.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be Christopher Larsen.

9 Christopher Larsen, you may unmute your
10 audio.

11 MR. LARSEN: Good evening. I'm a resident on
12 30th Street. I'm against the proposal, especially
13 the way that it stands at present. I have been a
14 living, working musician here on 30th Street for 35
15 year. I'm a native New Yorker. I recorded the
16 Rangers goal song that everybody is familiar, if
17 you're truly a New York fan.

18 This is really disrupting our neighborhood
19 businesses. You know, I've used the music stores
20 here, the studios here. I live in a loft here on
21 30th Street. I have a senior roommate with a
22 disabled son. We do a lot of events here. We
23 facilitate the two gentlemen to my side, I'm not sure
24 if you can see them. They are two blind individuals,
25 Robert and Anthony, who come in and do Saturday

2 afternoon workshops with us here.

3 So I can submit my main points in writing,
4 I've just -- will stand that I'm against this, the
5 neighborhood is against this. And it seems to be
6 something that's being pushed through at a time when
7 the city is at a 30-year low for real estate
8 occupancy.

9 The statements about Penn Station being
10 blighted, well, I walk through it every day, and it
11 really is not as bad as some people from the suburbs
12 would believe it is; but, you know, that's -- I have
13 plenty of photos to show to the contrary.

14 But I will let Robert and Anthony just say a
15 little bit because they have an Access-A-Ride and may
16 not be able to go late into the night.

17 MR. WEEKES: Hello, my name is Robert Weekes.
18 I have a disability. I use a cane. This is the
19 studio we use to practice. Please help us out.
20 There's nowhere else that we could go. We need to
21 continue this.

22 I support -- I go to the blind karate just
23 across the street; and after that, I go straight
24 across here. Sometimes someone drops me, and they
25 use the parking lot to leave the car; so it's

2 difficult. Please help us out. This is the only
3 place we have to practice. Please help us out.
4 Thank you.

5 MR. STEWART: Yeah. Yeah, my name is
6 Anthony Stewart. I'm against this project. You
7 cannot do this. Okay. I'm a blind -- I'm a blind
8 musician, I have -- I work with Steve. Okay.

9 I have a -- he has a disabled son. He's been
10 helping us out. This a place you cannot -- you
11 cannot close us down. This is a place we do music.
12 There's no other place for us to go.

13 Okay. This is -- I have mental health
14 issues. This saved my life. Please do not close us
15 down. I'm very pissed off. Don't close it down.

16 MR. WEEKES: Don't close it down. We want to
17 continue living. Thank you very much.

18 MR. STEWART: Yes, this is how -- we're
19 musicians. This how we do our -- we're working
20 musicians, and I'm blind. He's been helping us out,
21 he's been giving us lessons for free. He's a good
22 guy. You can't do this.

23 MR. LARSEN: Well done, guys.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you.
25 Thank you, all three, for your testimony.

2 Our next speaker will be Rebecca Sanin.

3 Rebecca Sanin. You may unmute your audio and begin
4 when you're ready.

5 MS. SANIN: Can you hear me?

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

7 MS. SANIN: Okay. Good evening. My name is
8 Rebecca Sanin. I am the President and CEO of the
9 Health and Welfare Council of Long Island, an
10 umbrella organization for hundreds of human service
11 agencies across the Long Island region.

12 I'm here to testify tonight because Long
13 Island and New York City share a mutual economy. We
14 know that taking care of the suburbs that surround
15 the city impact New York City's vibrance and New York
16 City's accessibility impacts Long Island.

17 The ecosystem and relationships between the
18 city and the suburbs is the foundation that sets New
19 York apart in the northeastern region of the United
20 States. Penn Station is a point of access for Long
21 Islanders who jump on trains at all hours of the
22 morning and evening for opportunities to earn income,
23 to recreate and to experience much of what makes our
24 New York community so strong and vital.

25 We have an aging population on Long Island,

2 which is a region without so much of the city's
3 strength that exists in its systems. For example, on
4 Long Island, we don't have a public transportation
5 system, despite our wide geographic sprawl. Our
6 aging population needs opportunities to participate
7 in public life and to experience connectivity. As we
8 know, as our populations age, there are often
9 physical supports that are crucial to access.

10 Similarly, our differently-abled population
11 deserve the opportunity to access New York City and
12 need different criteria in order to obtain that
13 access. It is our job as planners and leaders to
14 maker sure that every project with public impacts
15 strengthens access for the wide diverse community
16 with diverse needs and has a lens that looks at
17 multiple applications of equity.

18 One thing COVID-19 has taught us is that we
19 impact each other. My well-being impacts yours, and
20 yours impacts mine.

21 Public transportation is social determinative
22 of health. Access to care is often determined by
23 transportation access. And if we want to increase
24 the well-being of our New York community, then
25 improving access to an accessible Penn Station is

2 vital. This is why I'm here speaking today.
3 Improvements to Penn Station are long overdue for the
4 members of the differently-abled community who
5 unfairly face Penn's inaccessibility and unfriendly
6 design for decades.

7 For example, today the existing station only
8 contains two elevators at street level, which is, of
9 course, woefully inadequate for North America's
10 busiest transportation hub. The only proper elevator
11 that goes directly to the lower level is only
12 accessible through Madison Square Garden's loading
13 dock in the middle of the block single, which itself
14 is difficult to access and difficult to find and
15 navigate.

16 This is just not an acceptable expectation of
17 the general public's potential need for access, let
18 alone for folks who are aged, differently-abled,
19 perhaps pregnant or struggling with a medical
20 condition and in need of easy, safe access.

21 The other elevator located on 34th and
22 Seventh only allows access to a limited number of
23 tracks. In other directions, it's surrounded by
24 staircases and other obstacles. The bottom line is
25 that obstacles stymie access. Physical obstacles say

2 you're not welcome here. They segregate naturally
3 who can participate and who can't; and this cannot be
4 what we accept in 2022 in the great State of New
5 York.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten-second warning.

7 MS. SANIN: Okay. On the platform level, the
8 large columns make platforms narrow and dangerous for
9 folks to get around. Imagine being in a wheelchair
10 and needing a cane or a walker, it's an unfathomable
11 experience. Planning must consider mobility and
12 address the most pressing and urgent needs to access.
13 Governor Hochul --

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony. You can feel -- please feel free to
16 submit your additional written testimony to the email
17 or mailing addresses.

18 Our next speaker will be Diana Stewart.

19 MS. STEWART: Hi.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi, Diana.

21 MS. STEWART: Yes, I'm trying to turn on my
22 video.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: It was on. And we hear
24 you as well.

25 MS. STEWART: Can you see me now?

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

3 MS. STEWART: Because I don't see myself.

4 Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak
5 briefly today. I'm a long-term resident of the
6 Chelsea neighborhood, and I've always considered the
7 area around Penn Station and the Pennsylvania Hotel,
8 even the Stewart Hotel -- no relationship to my last
9 name -- and the many other wonderful -- the churches,
10 the other wonderful buildings in that part of the
11 city to be part of my neighborhood.

12 I'm very concerned about what's going to
13 happen with the destruction of my neighborhood. The
14 Hudson Yards is not a plus in our neighborhood. It
15 reminds me of another planet that's come down to take
16 over. It doesn't give us the chance to grow and
17 respect the integrity of what is already there and
18 the history.

19 Hotel Pennsylvania has -- was a -- has
20 provided opportunity for schools to be hosted in
21 their grounds, has provided -- has an opportunity
22 creatively looking at it to do much more for the
23 housing issue. We have so many homeless people on
24 the streets now. It's so sad. We need to do
25 something. We need to prioritize their needs, and

2 I'm glad to hear the previous speakers talk about the
3 disabled. Because we have many people who have
4 disabilities. And as we get older, we have them that
5 we don't expect to have oftentimes. And we need to,
6 again, provide accessibility; and I haven't heard
7 very much about that in this plan.

8 We also need to show how we're going to meet
9 the needs of our environment, to keep ourselves in a
10 green place, to keep our environmental conditions
11 within -- within the realm of what is good for our
12 planet and how is -- what kind of pollution is this
13 project going to create for people who, like myself,
14 who live in Chelsea? I won't even be able to look up
15 and admire the Empire State Building anymore because
16 it will be blocked by these super Hudson Yard,
17 impersonal icicle buildings.

18 So I'm asking don't destroy the integrity of
19 the neighborhood and do not displace the residents.
20 Do not breakdown the great landmark churches and
21 other buildings in the neighborhood because we are
22 part of history and we need to maintain integrity in
23 our neighborhood.

24 And also, you know, think of it this way:
25 Are we warriors, or are we warriors? If we were

2 warriors, we can solve these problems and make a
3 commitment to maintaining the lives of the people who
4 are in the neighborhood now and bring -- bring the
5 joy and excitement of the people who live here now
6 into the future. Don't take them out of it. Thank
7 you.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Our next speaker will be Erika Petersen.

11 MS. PETERSEN: Am I with you?

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear you
13 and see you.

14 MS. PETERSEN: Great. Lovely testimony from
15 people who live there. I'm Erika Petersen, the vice
16 president of the West End Preservation Society that
17 has succeeded in making a historic district of the
18 West End Avenue and its side streets.

19 So I do know something about what people
20 living here want. I have two things to say. For
21 Penn Station, everybody seems to say, yes, something
22 has to be done. Yes, we came in like lords and now
23 we scuttle in like rats, maybe we should do something
24 different and maybe we should, you know, expand it,
25 and it sounds right.

2 But I don't understand why the thing has to
3 go above the ground. And I understand exactly why it
4 has go above the ground and so does anyone else who
5 really pays any attention. This not concern for us.
6 This is -- I would love to know what all the tax
7 breaks are and all the, you know, what's going to be
8 actually -- who is going to -- cui bono? You know,
9 who is going to benefit from this?

10 I -- it's interesting because you keep
11 showing this eight acres of public space. This looks
12 horrible to me, it's just concrete. So we need eight
13 acres of concrete. People already have a streetscape
14 and that streetscape we have formed by living there
15 and I -- to impose upon us this kind of mall like
16 with, you know, a few tree wells and concrete. You
17 know where the sand comes from the concrete? It
18 comes from the Indian rivers that we are -- so when
19 you talk about environmental problems what we -- how
20 much sand will be taken from other countries so that
21 we can build these things?

22 What's there is important. I honestly don't
23 think people come to New York City to see more glass
24 and steel. They can go to Dubai; they can go to
25 Shanghai; they can go to all these cities that are

2 all looking alike. And I think that we should retain
3 what we've got. And what we've got is a streetscape
4 made by people who live there.

5 This business about affordable apartments.
6 Honestly, I'm listening to it at the beginning, and
7 I'm just -- I'm laughing because I know that
8 that's -- I think anyone -- well, it's hard to accept
9 that that is really part of it.

10 And then all of these empty office buildings.
11 And so we're going to -- we're going to take away all
12 these people's homes and their businesses so that we
13 can put up these great big things so that the people
14 at the top get all these tax breaks and get all these
15 blah, blah, blah.

16 I -- I -- it's distressing to me. Also the
17 construction unions, I'm totally with them --

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten-second warning.

19 MS. PETERSEN: Yep. In terms of their desire
20 to work. But there's so much work to be done, it
21 doesn't have to be building new buildings.

22 It can be re -- you know, reconstructing
23 buildings. It can be renovating. There's a lot of
24 work for construction people. They don't --

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,

2 Erika Petersen, for your testimony. You may submit
3 the remainder of your testimony in writing.

4 Our next -- we will now introduce the next
5 list of ten speakers. If you -- if your name is on
6 this list, you can anticipate that you'll speak in
7 approximately the next half an hour.

8 The list of the next ten speakers is:

9 Kathryn Paulsen;
10 Christine Youngberg;
11 Anthony Egleston;
12 Richard Gilligan, Jr;
13 Tafadar Sourov;
14 Rimvydas Glinskis;
15 John Garra;
16 Raymond Minieri;
17 Sinade Wadsworth;
18 And Peter Brereton.

19 It is our -- based on this list, it appears
20 that Anthony Egleston is not present tonight. If
21 Anthony Egleston or a representative for
22 Anthony Egleston is on the line, please send an email
23 to help@publicworkspartners.com and to let us know
24 the right name or your -- the phone number at which
25 you've joined the meeting.

2 At this time, we will invite Kathryn Paulsen
3 to give her testimony.

4 MS. PAULSEN: Hi. I'm Kathryn Paulsen. I
5 live in the neighborhood; and like most of the
6 residents of the neighborhood from whom we've heard,
7 I strongly oppose this plan which seems to be nothing
8 other than a real estate land grab, masquerading as
9 something that will help improve the Penn Station.
10 We don't need eight or nine or ten, as someone
11 eloquently said, icicle buildings for which,
12 apparently, we're willing to sacrifice historical
13 buildings.

14 If anything should be replaced, it should be
15 Madison Square Garden. I appreciate my
16 councilpersons having pointed out that -- that there
17 hasn't been much being done to really make that
18 happen. And yeah, I -- remembering from the previous
19 hearing, someone's remark that there seemed to be a
20 host of real estate interests, Vornado prominent
21 among them that are trying to clearcut our city.
22 Hudson Yards was one step; this plan would be
23 another.

24 I -- you know, I also would support
25 Erik Bottcher's remarks of really having facilities

2 that would help those who live here; supportive
3 housing, not the kind of so-called affordable housing
4 that the plan proposes. Thank you.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 Our next speaker will be Christine Youngberg.
8 Christine Youngberg.

9 MS. YOUNGBERG: Yes. Hello.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yep, you can start when
11 you're ready.

12 MS. YOUNGBERG: Thank you. I'd just like to
13 say that I feel we can build the future without
14 destroying the past and that we're being sold a bunch
15 of office buildings with train station entrances
16 instead of an actual train station.

17 I feel like the people of New York and the
18 region deserve a beautiful new aboveground transit
19 hub and a plan that integrates new construction with
20 some of the area's beautiful historic buildings.

21 People aren't really drawn to New York City
22 by soulless corporate office parks like we're being
23 given here. They're drawn to the city's mix of old
24 and new. Tribeca and the West Village are two of
25 Manhattan's most vibrant and desirable neighborhoods,

2 in large part because of their historic architecture
3 and their mix of buildings.

4 So I think that any new plan should include
5 the landmarks-eligible St. John the Baptist Roman
6 Catholic Church, which is a beautiful 150-year old
7 church, and the art deco Gimbel Sky Bridge and some
8 of the other useful buildings that still exist in the
9 neighborhood.

10 The brilliant transformation of the
11 James Farley post office into the Moynihan Train Hall
12 was a great start for the much-needed redevelopment
13 of the Penn Station area's regional transit hub. But
14 the current plans and unimaginative backward thinking
15 plan that isn't really worthy of New York City and
16 the region, and it doesn't solve our transportation
17 problems, and it doesn't really make the most of our
18 opportunity. I think it's environmentally and
19 culturally insensitive.

20 So the last thing we need is another
21 taxpayer-funded glass skyscraper mall that looks like
22 it belongs in Abu Dubai. I think they'll destroy a
23 lot of the Empire State Building views that make it
24 so wonderful for tourists, visitors, residents to
25 walk around the area. And I think that the building

2 that should be moved is the ugly Madison Square
3 Garden because it's located exactly where our new
4 aboveground train station should be built.

5 So in closing, I would just like to say that
6 I do think we have an opportunity here, but the
7 current plan is not the one we should seize. And now
8 that Andrew Cuomo is gone, I hope that Governor
9 Hochul will reimagine this plan and that we won't
10 continue to let Andrew Cuomo govern by building the
11 deal that he made with real estate developers.

12 So thank you very much, and thank you to all
13 the other speakers as well.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony. Our next speaker will be
16 Richard Gilligan, Jr.

17 Richard Gilligan, Jr., you may unmute your
18 audio and let us know when you're ready to speak.
19 All right. We can see you now.

20 MR. GILLIGAN: Okay. I'm with you now?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. You can start
22 when you're ready.

23 MR. GILLIGAN: Good evening. And thank you
24 for giving me this opportunity to speak on what I
25 feel is such an important project for myself as a

2 daily commuter and the more than 650,000 commuters
3 that pass through Penn Station every day.

4 My name is Richard Gilligan, Jr., a lifelong
5 New York City resident and a business agent with
6 Plumbers Local Union Number 1, representing more than
7 6,000 members here in New York City.

8 Being a lifelong New Yorker who uses mass
9 transit on a daily basis, I have firsthand knowledge
10 of the shortfalls a project like this will address.
11 Penn Station, as it stands today, is dark, narrow,
12 cramped and unpleasant on a good day. Not to mention
13 the travel delays that cost employers millions of
14 dollars in employees' lost time that will be
15 addressed with the proposed addition of the new
16 tracks and platforms.

17 New Moynihan station is a prime example of
18 bringing project to life that greatly improved not
19 only the neighborhood it serves, but the quality of
20 life for commuters. With its open spaces and
21 improved access to Amtrak and subway and its new
22 retail spaces, creating long-term jobs.

23 The Penn Station area redevelopment project
24 will expand its vision of bringing natural light to
25 open spaces, improved commuter movement, new retail

2 spaces to an outdated and underutilized Penn Station
3 as it stands today.

4 This project will also create thousands of
5 construction jobs that will pave the way to the
6 middle class by providing fair wages and benefits, as
7 well as retail employment and ownership opportunities
8 after its completion.

9 In closing, improving Penn Station and the
10 surrounding area will enable even more people to
11 choose to use mass transit and leave their cars at
12 home. I urge you to support this much-needed project
13 and make the lives of New Yorkers better. Thank you
14 and have a good night.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 Our next speaker will be Tafadar Sourov, who
18 I believe I just saw.

19 MR. SOUROV: Hi, can you hear me?

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can hear you.

21 MR. SOUROV: Hi. So good afternoon and thank
22 you for the chance to present this commentary. My
23 name is Tafadar, and I'm a proud New Yorker, as well
24 as a member of Laborers' Local 79. And I was born in
25 Bangladesh, but I immigrated to the United States

2 when I was three years old, and I grew up in the
3 Bronx in a heavily immigrant community where families
4 struggled to make ends meet, where the employment
5 opportunities were limited due to language barriers.

6 My mother worked behind the cash register, my
7 uncle worked as a taxi driver, my friends' parents
8 were (inaudible); and growing up, my peers and I
9 understood that you always have the responsibility as
10 first generation immigrants to take care of our
11 families as we got older.

12 Belonging to a union has allowed me to honor
13 that obligation. I'm a graduate of the Laborers's
14 Local 79 apprenticeship program, which changed my
15 life. Being a construction worker allowed me to move
16 my family into a home of our own and create
17 generational wealth.

18 I found the American dream, and I'm here
19 today to encourage the Empire State Development to
20 make that possible for so many more New Yorkers by
21 passing the Penn Station reconstruction plan by doing
22 so with the project labor agreement (indecipherable)
23 will ensure family-sustaining wages and benefits for
24 more (indecipherable). Thank you.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your

2 testimony.

3 At this time, our New York City public
4 advocate, Jumaane Williams, has been able to join us.
5 So we're going to allow the public advocate to give
6 brief remarks next.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Greetings. I don't know if
8 everyone else can hear me.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Awesome. One second.
11 All right. Thank you so much. Peace and blessings,
12 love and light to everyone.

13 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Willaims.
14 I'm the public advocate for the City of New York.
15 Thank you for calling this much-needed hearing on the
16 General Project Plan once again.

17 Before I begin testimony, I definitely want
18 to acknowledge that the second iteration of the
19 hearing was needed, as December's hearing didn't seem
20 to be in compliance with ADA laws. And it's very
21 crucial that we impact community members and
22 residents, make it accessible for New Yorkers. We
23 gotta start making it the norm, civic engagement,
24 especially during this pandemic and remote,
25 especially in response to development. Gotta make

2 sure it's accessible on all fronts for disabilities
3 and language access. I appreciate that we're trying
4 to do that now.

5 Efforts to improve and renovate Penn Station
6 are not only welcome by community members and myself,
7 but should be beneficial towards residents around the
8 area proposing the General Project Plan, as well as
9 the New York City itself. However, it appears that
10 this particular plan raises a few concerns around
11 transparency and community involvement.

12 As written, it does not sufficiently plan for
13 the much-needed infrastructure transit improvements
14 therein needs. As such, I'm concerned the proposed
15 GPP is not moving forward necessarily with the best
16 interests of New Yorkers, particularly with the speed
17 that it's moving forward; and, hopefully, we can slow
18 it down a little bit.

19 Although community members would collectively
20 agree, and myself included, that Penn Station needs
21 much repair and renovation, GPP's omission to
22 included upgrades and expansion of Penn Station and
23 the scope of work as well as the lack of some
24 transparency disallows me to have complete support
25 right now, and I understand why community support is

2 lacking.

3 The lack of transparency much-needed
4 revisions remains a cause for concern, despite
5 community efforts to gain transparency from ESD and
6 the governor's office, even though there was slight
7 tweaks made with the new administration.

8 Moving forward, this plan should happen only
9 if we have received a transit infrastructure update
10 that talks about plans and the funding. Then we
11 would be able talk about finalizing any real estate
12 development plans that would be associated with this
13 new Penn Station footprint. Seems like we're talking
14 about the real estate development plans before we
15 even understand some of the infrastructure.

16 The city's uniform land use review process
17 has been wildly ignored in the making of the GPP,
18 which raises more concerns for community members and
19 residents whose lives the GPP would impact for years
20 come. No developer should bypass the opportunity for
21 community members and residents to negotiate
22 developments that include increased office spaces but
23 little affordable housing, especially when affordable
24 income housing is what we need. And we're all very
25 concerned right now how much office space we'll

2 actually need as we get through this pandemic.

3 Little disturbed that the state is trying to
4 just get any ground around some of the processes that
5 already exist in the city. Penn Station should
6 undergo the much-needed transformation to make our
7 public transportation more accessible, frequent and
8 accommodating. And these plans should not come
9 second to real estate development opportunities that
10 provide more office space and small pockets of
11 affordable housing in the area.

12 As a public advocate, I would implore the
13 body to further these plans by first going through
14 the city's ULURP process, providing members the
15 opportunity to express their concerns and working
16 with the Empire State developers to establish a plan
17 that puts both community and transit and
18 infrastructure needs first.

19 But now the land development plan should be
20 finalized -- shouldn't be finalized until, as I
21 mentioned earlier, we understand what the footprint
22 of the new Penn Station is actually going to be.
23 Once the land development plan has been made with
24 increased (indecipherable) as well as the cost to
25 taxpayers, close contact with community residents

2 will be crucial.

3 I do want to say this is not about stopping
4 the development. I think it's important. But so
5 many other development plans that have been put forth
6 have not benefited the community as it was said,
7 especially not the city as a whole. And I'm hoping
8 it will push forward the plans that don't take into
9 account success as just a few people, but the city as
10 a whole. We've had too many of these development
11 plans that have not done what was said it would do.
12 Hudson Yards is a great example. It's very
13 beautiful, but I don't know if it benefited --
14 provided help to people who needed the most help in
15 this city.

16 So this is not against development. I want
17 to make sure we got some good union jobs as well. I
18 want to make sure that PALs are strong but they also
19 should be legally binding. We've run into problems
20 before with that again. This just seems to be from
21 one administration to another administration trying
22 to do a quick kind of land grab to do real estate
23 without fully understanding what we're building on.
24 That does concern me. So I'm looking forward to
25 continuing the conversations.

2 Thank you for the time you gave me to testify
3 here today.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Our next speaker will be Rimvydas Glinskis.

7 We can see your video, so you may start when
8 you're ready.

9 MR. GLINSKIS: Okay. Can you hear me?

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

11 MR. GLINSKIS: Thank you. I'm Rimvydas
12 Glinskis, vice president of Lithuanian Alliance of
13 America.

14 Our headquarters is on the side edge of the
15 Site 1. It's the oldest organization of Lithuanians
16 in the United States, established in 1886. And we
17 acquire this building in 1910 because it was just
18 built, Penn Station. And for immigrants from
19 Lithuania, they came to Ellis Island, and this
20 organization helped them to settle in the United
21 States, why the location was picked at the new train
22 station.

23 And this organization is -- has huge archives
24 from over 100,000 people who came to the United
25 States, was members of this organization. And we

2 have chapters, about 50, in the entire United States
3 and Canada. Now in this archive was published books,
4 magazines and we have all this huge archive in the
5 building and that happening at the edge of this Site
6 1.

7 In 2006, was similar project that Vornado
8 wanted to do very similar project, but recession at
9 the time stopped this project. Beware outsiders that
10 project, now we in. That means this agents of this
11 old project is so easy, was easy created and that
12 never looked to more carefully for historical values.
13 And we are eligible. For now, we're eligible for New
14 York State and New York City.

15 They are -- we accepted our proposals, and
16 we're waiting for more to be the landmark in that
17 list. And that means I don't know if that
18 environment proposal project was included that
19 information. Thank you.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Our next speaker will -- I believe that our
23 next speaker, John Garra, is not present. So if you
24 are John Garra or a representative thereof, please
25 email help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know the

2 phone number or other way in which we can -- we can
3 identify you.

4 So we'll move on to the next speaker, who's
5 Raymond Minieri.

6 MR. MINIERI: Okay. Can you hear me?

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can. You can
8 start when you're ready.

9 MR. MINIERI: Okay, thank you. I appreciate
10 the opportunity to speak at this hearing. My name is
11 Raymond Minieri. I'm a business rep for the SMART
12 sheet Metal Workers Transportation Workers Local 28
13 in New York City.

14 I also commute to the city from Long Island
15 for over 35 years. And it's, you know, Penn Station
16 is really run down and it's embarrassing to see the
17 station when you see other stations how bad -- how
18 nice they look in New York City is -- Penn Station is
19 a disgrace. It's really in dire need of this
20 project.

21 The project will create thousands of
22 construction jobs and thousands of jobs after the
23 project is completed. It will also create a lot of
24 jobs afterwards after everything is done. So I'm in
25 favor of this project, and I would ask that any work

2 include a project labor agreement and responsible
3 contractor language so we make sure that we have
4 responsible contractors that do the job right.
5 That's very important.

6 But I'm in favor of this project, and I
7 appreciate the time to let me speak here.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Our next speaker will be Sinade Wadsworth.
11 Sinade Wadsworth. Apologies if I'm not pronouncing
12 your name correctly. If you are present -- it looks
13 like that person is not actually present, so we'll
14 move on. If you are Sinade Wadsworth, please email
15 help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know.

16 The next speaker will be Peter Brereton.
17 Peter Brereton, you may unmute your audio and turn
18 your video on.

19 MR. BRERETON: Hello. My name is Peter
20 Brereton, and I'm in the New York City Carpenters'
21 Union, and I support this project wholeheartedly.

22 Opportunities to rebuild our infrastructure
23 don't come along often. We need to modernize New
24 York City to keep our great city going strong, and we
25 desperately need the jobs and rejuvenation that this

2 project will provide; so I support it. Thank you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you very much for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker will be -- well,
5 we're actually moving to the next set of ten speakers
6 at this time. If we can show that, so I'll read
7 the -- I'll read the next ten speakers, and then
8 we'll begin with the first speaker on that list, who
9 is Anthony Simon.

10 So the next set of speakers will be:

11 Anthony Simon;

12 Melissa Brown;

13 Kevin Barclay;

14 Joe Kelly;

15 George Calderaro;

16 Damaris Melendez;

17 Ross Boughton;

18 Megan Wylie;

19 Mitchell Moss;

20 And Roberta Gelb.

21 Out of that list, we have four speakers --
22 four registered speakers who are not present. If I
23 read your name, if you're on this list of four
24 speakers and you are present but under a different
25 name or phone number, please email

2 help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know how to
3 find you:

4 Melissa Brown;

5 Kevin Barclay;

6 Damaris Melendez;

7 And Megan Wylie.

8 If any of those four speakers are currently
9 present, please email the email address at the bottom
10 of your screen and let us know.

11 And so at this time, we will invite
12 Anthony Simon to begin your testimony.

13 MR. SIMON: Can you hear me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

15 MR. SIMON: Thank you. Good evening. My
16 name is Anthony Simon, I'm the general chairman for
17 SMART Transportation Union, representing over 3,000
18 Long Island Railroad workers in our region.

19 I'm speaking tonight in support of the
20 governor's revitalization project, specifically
21 regarding the Penn Station area. Clearly, the
22 Moynihan Train Hall is a breathtaking addition to
23 the transportation network in this area; but without
24 a complete overhaul of the existing Penn Station and
25 the often-forgotten track and platform infrastructure

2 beneath these iconic buildings, the MTA and Long
3 Island commuters remain underserved. This project is
4 vital to breathe life back into the overburdened
5 existing Penn Station at a time where expansion has
6 been at the forefront of the MTA.

7 During these challenging years of COVID, our
8 workforce has been delivering on huge projects at a
9 crucial time to expand and improve service for the
10 Long Islanders. This project is crucial to be able
11 to fully benefit from all of the expansion and
12 infrastructure improvement projects that have already
13 taken place.

14 Penn Station has always been the focal point
15 final stop for our riders. Therefore, our
16 organization fully supports its rebirth. While
17 station amenities improving retail in an inviting
18 environment are always a high priority, nothing
19 should come before solid, reliable and safe
20 infrastructure.

21 Lastly, there have been plenty of discussions
22 on crime, homelessness and safety concerns throughout
23 the MTA system of late. Clearly, a dark, boarded and
24 vacated Penn Station is not helping in this area, as
25 it poses an inviting place for crime and concerning

2 shelter options.

3 This project is so important to continue the
4 work necessary to reverse the negative conditions in
5 Penn Station and to build it back better than ever as
6 soon as possible.

7 On behalf of our work force, who remains
8 dedicated to bring Long Island Railroad riders back
9 to a safe, state-of-the-art rail hub in Manhattan, we
10 support Governor Hochul's world-class vision on this
11 historic improvement project.

12 I thank you for your time and for listening.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Our next speaker will be Joe Kelly.

16 Joe Kelly, you may let us know when you're
17 ready to begin.

18 MR. KELLY: We're ready.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: You can start when
20 you're ready.

21 MR. KELLY: Good evening, everyone. Thanks
22 for having this meeting. My name is Joe Kelly. I'm
23 a professional musician from the 30th Street musical
24 community. I speak on behalf of myself as well as
25 that musical community.

2 First thing I want to say is when I was
3 coming up, we had ourselves a musical community in
4 New York City on 48th Street. We used to call it
5 Music Row. The Music Row was destroyed years ago,
6 very similar to what is going to be taking place here
7 in the Penn Station area. We had nowhere to go, we
8 had to rebuild. I think it's important to state that
9 30th Street is now our musical community. We do our
10 recordings there, we buy our instruments there, we
11 help charitable organizations there, which is very,
12 very important.

13 You had Chris Larsen on a little while ago,
14 and he is part of our musical community. And when he
15 was talking to you about the different charities and
16 people that we help, he was with some of our blind
17 musician friends that we help. And it's very
18 important.

19 I also want to talk about the residents that
20 already exist there. There are thousands of people
21 that are living in this area that are going to be
22 disenfranchised by the time this development takes
23 place. But from my perspective, I think it's
24 important to say you'll be destroying Music Row once
25 again. We lost one when I was coming up on 48th

2 Street due to developmental projects. We built it up
3 again. We built it up on 30th Street. We have
4 ourselves a strong -- we will have nowhere to go. We
5 will not be able to help the people that we continue
6 to help. We will not be able to record the songs
7 that generate money and finance to help ourselves, as
8 well as helping the community.

9 Not to mention the numerous amounts of
10 historical buildings that are in that area. From my
11 last recollection, it's over 40. And these are the
12 things we have to take into consideration. We have
13 to take into consideration what exists now. And
14 especially during this COVID, a lot of people look at
15 this as a money grab. And I have to tell you, I can
16 understand where they're coming from on that.

17 This is a community. It's a very strong
18 community. It's the only music community we have in
19 New York City. And that's all I basically want to
20 say. Please rethink this.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 Our next speaker will be George Calderado.

24 MR. CALDERADO: Hello. Can you hear me?

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hello, yes.

2 MR. CALDERADO: I'm George Calderado, a board
3 member of the 29th Street Neighborhood Association,
4 which works to improve the quality of life in the
5 community that will be negatively affected by this
6 proposal. Our association, along with Community
7 Boards 4 and 5 as well as myriad organizations and
8 individuals, are opposed to this game to level nine
9 blocks in midtown around Penn Station containing up
10 to 50 viable historic buildings, including vast
11 structures which are occupied by hundreds of
12 businesses and residents.

13 Everyone hates Penn Station, but the current
14 Cuomo Hochul Vornado ESD scheme is not necessary to
15 improve Penn, which, as anyone can see, is already,
16 in fact, happening without the speculative
17 questionable revenue from ten super tall buildings
18 with 13 million square feet of inevitably empty
19 office space. We know that this plan was cooked up
20 by the corrupt, disgraced Andrew Cuomo as a payback
21 to his donor Vornado Realty for building his largely
22 decorative underutilized Moynihan Station.

23 But Cuomo is gone, and we are posing this
24 land group and years of unnecessary, unwanted
25 construction in our community. Starting with a

2 demolition of the McKim-, Mead- and White-designed
3 Hotel Pennsylvania, which is happening now despite
4 questionable legality. It's time to learn from our
5 mistakes and end Moses-era tactics of declaring a
6 functioning community blighted and using eminent
7 domain to bypass the public process and destroy
8 viable historic buildings and vibrant communities.

9 This so-called blighted condition was created
10 by the owners at Vornado Realty in much the same way
11 that the original Penn Station was not maintained and
12 suffered horrendous interventions by the building
13 owners to the point where the public could not
14 appreciate its magnificence until it was gone. The
15 same tactic that was attempted by the Grand Central
16 Railroad to demolish Grand Central Terminal which,
17 fortunately, failed.

18 Although Vornado refuses to discuss the Hotel
19 Pennsylvania and other buildings it plans to demolish
20 because it owns them already, these are all part of
21 the GPP project that will receive public funds and
22 should, therefore, be considered as part of the
23 project.

24 The concerns of our community has -- have
25 been disingenuously dismissed by ESD and Vornado, who

2 claim we're trying to preserve the Duane Reade and
3 single story modern buildings in the development
4 zone. This is not true.

5 Likewise, our contentions that we're trying
6 to get Madison Square Garden landmarked, these are
7 false red herrings meant to distract from the reality
8 that this proposal will destroy and diminish our
9 communities for years to come. The construction and
10 materials of many of the buildings to be demolished
11 were designed and built for the ages with massive
12 columns, granite, marble and brick.

13 This mindless destruction should be stopped
14 on the grounds of environmental sustainability alone.
15 A previous speaker spoke about the carbon loss. What
16 about these massive buildings? Our community already
17 resembles post-war London with vast --

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you, sir. My
19 apologies. Your time is up. If you'd like to submit
20 the balance of your testimony via email or mail,
21 please do so to the addresses that are on your
22 screen. Thank you for your testimony.

23 Our next speaker will be Ross Boughton.

24 MR. BOUGHTON: Hello. Can you hear me?

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. Yes. We can see

2 and hear you. Go ahead.

3 MR. BOUGHTON: Okay. Yes. I'm also against
4 the proposal. I feel the neighborhood is vital as it
5 is, and we've seen many of these kinds of urban
6 renewal bait and switch projects go on in the past.
7 And I'm against it. There you have it. Thank you.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Our next speaker will be Mitchell Moss.

11 Mitchell Moss, if you'd like to unmute your
12 audio and turn on your video, you may begin.

13 MR. MOSS: Can you see me? Can you hear me?

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. Yep. You may
15 begin when you're ready.

16 MR. MOSS: My name is Mitchell Moss. I'm a
17 resident of New York City and a faculty member at New
18 York City University.

19 This is a strategic opportunity for
20 Governor Hochul to correct the errors of
21 Nelson Rockefeller, who failed to purchase Penn
22 Station when the Pennsylvania Railroad went bankrupt.
23 He had the chance; he screwed up. It's also a chance
24 to correct some the shortcomings of Andrew Cuomo's
25 transformation of the Farley post office where he did

2 create a spectacular structure, gave it to Amtrak,
3 but he failed to move the Amtrak offices and workers
4 across Eighth Avenue along with the ticketing and
5 waiting room for Amtrak.

6 With the rise of remote work and the high
7 cost of housing in New York City, we witnessed an
8 expansion of our regional boundaries. New York is
9 drawing workers from 100 miles as well as from the
10 five boroughs.

11 As we know, most of the people who work in
12 New York live in New York. But many of our -- much
13 of our economy, almost a million people a day, come
14 into the city to work. The rise of the
15 super-commuter has been made possible by technology
16 and by transportation systems built almost a hundred
17 years ago.

18 Let me point out that Penn Station is going
19 to be more and not rather than less important in the
20 future as we see the city become a focal point of
21 people coming out over a period of three to four days
22 a week.

23 I also want to point out, and I think this is
24 important to mention, that the entire Madison Square
25 Garden debate that we've heard about is something

2 which is not really well understood. Madison Square
3 Garden is, in fact, just where it should be, sitting
4 above the city and regions's best transportation
5 infrastructure. It hosts multiple events on a single
6 day without massive parking lots for automobiles.

7 I don't know why Constul and Fostard
8 (phonetics) wants to bring all those cars into the
9 West Village, but we should recognize that Madison
10 Square Garden is so heavily used, not just for teams,
11 most of the teams are not doing so well, but for
12 concerts high school and college graduations, sports
13 events, major musical events and even political
14 conventions when they come to New York.

15 And I want to say two other points. And this
16 is crucial, I think, to understand is that we should
17 use this investment to improve the area. And I think
18 that the musicians who spoke have a great case for
19 performance space for artist housing like we have on
20 42nd Street and for assuring that we have live/work
21 settings there, not just office towers.

22 I'm struck by the hostility and the
23 widespread agreement that sterility of Hudson Yards
24 is not something we want to repeat. We should be
25 sure not to repeat it, in fact. But it's really

2 important, I think, to understand that if we move
3 Amtrak workers and facilities out, we can open up the
4 interior space, creating waiting and arrival areas
5 for passengers that incorporate natural light into
6 the depressing corridors and plazas that are now what
7 everyone recognizes as depressing Penn Station.

8 And let me just -- one point. New York
9 City's only great advantage is the ease of human
10 contact. The interaction that's the basis for
11 creativity and productivity and the arts and media
12 and finance, higher ed and tech-based industries. We
13 can't --

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me, I'm sorry.
15 I -- I missed the time clock and wasn't aware that
16 your time was up.

17 Thank you for your testimony. You may feel
18 free to submit the balance of it via email or mail.

19 Our next speaker will be Roberta Gelb.
20 Roberta Gelb, you may --

21 MS. GELB: Good evening.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good evening.

23 MS. GELB: I'd like to just say that there's
24 a false premise here that you're either for Penn --
25 fixing Penn Station or you're against it. That's not

2 the case.

3 What the case is that this has totally
4 bypassed the ULURP process. That is a process
5 whereby people have a chance to speak about this.
6 When I heard about this, the first thing I thought
7 was I've been in the city for 45 years, and this is
8 the most politically egregious thing I've ever seen.
9 I hope everyone reads today's Times and catches the
10 article "Hochul Amassed a Campaign Fortune, Here's
11 Who It Came From."

12 If you have any question about this project,
13 if you have any question about why 2,371 apartment
14 dwellers will be evicted to put up these towers, if
15 you have any question as to why 1,296 small
16 businesses will be forced out, read the article in
17 today's Times. Follow the money. This is a land
18 grab.

19 We want the jobs for the union people, we
20 want the people from the Bronx to get here easily, we
21 want the people from Long Island to have an easier
22 commute. We're all getting older. We want to be
23 able to get in and out of Penn Station easily. But
24 not to the destruction of a neighborhood for empty
25 buildings. How many commercial buildings do we need

2 to have empty in this city? Who is making money on
3 this?

4 Yes, fix Penn Station, but not at the cost of
5 people's homes, of businesses. And read the article.
6 Follow the money. Thank you.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 At this time, we are going -- we have
10 completed our third set of ten speakers, and we are
11 going to take our first ten-minute break so that the
12 ASL interpreters and the stenographer are able to
13 have a brief recess.

14 It is right now 7:04. We will return at
15 7:14, at which time we will commence with our next
16 set of speakers.

17 The first speaker at that time -- I'll just
18 let you know the first two speakers after the break
19 will be Letoya Washington and Percy Lujan. We will
20 recommence at 7:14 p.m. So we'll see you then.
21 Thank you.

22 (Whereupon, a short break was taken.)

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: We will resume your
24 public hearing for the Penn Station area
25 redevelopment project GPP, DEIS and proposed changes.

2 At this time we will call the list of the
3 next ten speakers, including those who are absent.
4 So our next ten speakers will be:

5 Letoya Washington;
6 Percy Lujan;
7 Michael Clancy;
8 Megan Finn;
9 Caroline Purr;
10 Levy Messinett;
11 Billy Killoran;
12 Rohnen Frederick;
13 David Hoover;
14 Maria Kirke.

15 Out of that list, it appears that the
16 following speakers are not -- registered speakers are
17 not currently on the call. If you are one of the
18 following people or representatives, please let us
19 know by emailing the help@publicworkspartners.com
20 email address to let us know the name or phone number
21 at which to find you.

22 So the following speakers -- registered
23 speakers appear to be absent:

24 Michael Clancy;
25 Billy Killoran;

2 Rhonen Frederick;

3 David Hoover.

4 If you're one of those registered speakers,
5 please let us know by emailing
6 help@publicworkspartners.com.

7 So we'll proceed with the speakers who are
8 present, beginning with Letoya Washington.

9 Letoya Washington, you may unmute your audio
10 and turn on your video to begin.

11 MS. WASHINGTON: Okay. Can you hear me?

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

13 MS. WASHINGTON: Okay. Great. Good evening
14 and thank you for the chance to present this
15 commentary.

16 My name is Letoya Washington, and I am a
17 proud New Yorker and a member of Laborers Local' 79.
18 I'm originally from Missouri and I moved to New York
19 to start a new life. Back home there were limited
20 opportunities for women in the work field that are
21 traditionally male-dominated. I know that the
22 possibilities for what I could achieve would be
23 higher, and if they -- like this and I was right.

24 As a union construction worker, I made a
25 living that has allowed me to start and raise a

2 family, as well as own my own home. My children are
3 able to think about their futures without -- without
4 having to deal with the same challenges I had at
5 their age. Any parent can relate to the feeling of
6 relief of knowing this. Although more women are
7 employed in construction now, I began my career when
8 I was not -- when it was not as common.

9 Being a -- being a union member leveled the
10 playing field for me to become an accomplished young
11 woman, and I'm proud of the example I set for women
12 who stand up to gender stereotypes and employment.

13 The Penn Station project can provide plenty
14 of opportunities for women like myself and New
15 Yorkers who are looking to make a living wage -- make
16 a fair living.

17 With -- with the PL -- with the project labor
18 agreement, the development can provide a sustaining
19 wage and benefits, I support the plan and encourage
20 Empire State Development to pass it with project
21 labor agreement. Thank you.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Our next speaker will be Percy Lujan or
25 Lujan. Percy Lujan. I can see you.

2 MR. LUJAN: How are you doing? Can everybody
3 hear me?

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

5 MR. LUJAN: Hi, how are you? I am Percy
6 Lujan, I am a member of LIUNA Local 78. Thank you
7 very much for giving me the opportunity to present my
8 testimony.

9 As a member of Local 78, we are asbestos
10 workers and HAZMAT workers. We remove the hazardous
11 materials such as asbestos, lead. We do very vital
12 work in the city, especially when it comes down to
13 the demolition of buildings. These materials were
14 used in old construction, and they are dangerous to
15 the public. Our union specializes in removing them.

16 We have contract -- contract -- contractors
17 that are binded by contract to provide PPE and safety
18 precautions so the workers that are involved in
19 these -- in these work, such as myself, are
20 protected. And that is guaranteed with a union, that
21 a union that protects me, protects my rights as a
22 worker to demand that these PPE, these protection,
23 plus the benefits and the training that comes with
24 being part of a union, get done and get provided by
25 the contractors.

2 We -- I believe that with this project, you
3 will bring work for our -- for many of our members,
4 as well as labor such as my sister, Letoya. So I
5 want second her statement about that PLA, Project
6 Labor Agreement, is vital for this project. Thank
7 you very much.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Our next speaker will be Megan Finn.
11 Megan Finn, you may unmute your audio and turn on
12 your video.

13 MS. FINN: Hello. Thank you for giving me
14 the chance to speak. Let me make this quick. I'm a
15 member of IBW Local 3. I just want to encourage this
16 project to be built with a PLA agreement. Thank you.
17 Bye.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Our next speaker will be Caroline Purr.

21 Caroline Purr, you may unmute your audio.
22 Yep. We can see you, and I think you're unmuted.

23 MS. PURR: Hi. Thank you for hosting, and
24 thank you for allowing me to speak.

25 I am a native New Yorker. I'm born and

2 raised in Queens, and I am a lifelong musician who
3 has -- have been -- I've been practicing on 30th
4 Street for about 15 years. There are a lot of
5 wonderful workshops there, and there are communities
6 for the blind where Stevie Marshall and friends have
7 wonderful workshops to help people who have lost
8 their families, unfortunately. Gives them a place to
9 go and feel like they're a part of a community.

10 St. John the Baptist Church is a wonderful
11 place that helps people, counsels with substance
12 abuse. And alcoholics anonymous has a wonderful, and
13 it's just, obviously, a beautiful structure. There
14 are many important landmarked buildings that would be
15 terrible to tear them down as the community holds so
16 much atmosphere. Our city is a place where people go
17 to live out these dreams and, you know, partake in
18 this beautiful atmosphere, and it would just be a
19 shame for it to be destroyed. And I'm hoping there's
20 a way that Penn Station can be improved upon while
21 not destroying the surrounding area and displacing
22 thousands of residents who will have to live with
23 that forever.

24 So thank you for letting me speak. Have a
25 good night. Thank you.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 Our next speaker will be Levi Messinetti.

5 Levi Messinetti, you may unmute your audio
6 and let us know when you're ready to speak.

7 MR. MESSINETTI: How about now, can you hear
8 me?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, perfect.

10 MR. MESSINETTI: Okay. Levi Messinetti here.
11 I'm a member of the New York City Carpenters Local
12 157 and a past president of that union, representing
13 over 8,000 members.

14 The redevelopment of the dangerous public
15 health hazard eyesore and international embarrassment
16 that is Penn Station and the surrounding area is a
17 project that is at least ten years past due. I think
18 most people can agree on that. Additional entrances,
19 exits, wider belowground corridors, open public
20 spaces, managing pedestrian traffic will modernize,
21 beautify this area and bring it back to being the
22 busiest, most important public transit hub in the
23 city, maybe anywhere.

24 So New York City needs a state of the art hub
25 like this. So let's build it. Let's build it safe.

2 Let's build it union. Let's not put people on the
3 street or out of business. But let's do this in a
4 transparent way. And as a result, we'll have a
5 transit hub that we can be proud of that lasts a long
6 time into the future. So let's build it union.
7 Thank you.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Our next speaker will Maria Kirke.
11 Maria Kirke. And we just lost our slide deck.

12 But if Maria Kirke is ready to speak. You
13 may -- yep. We can see you, and you're unmuted as
14 well. So you may begin when you're ready.

15 MS. KIRKE: Okay. Thank you. As a native
16 New Yorker, born and raised in Manhattan, my
17 testimony is as follows:

18 I understand the need for some transit
19 improvement, but this plan, I believe, needs to be
20 reimaged and restructured. Most importantly, I say
21 no to the displacement of the residences and
22 businesses on 30th Street. This is a historic music
23 district that most definitely is not blighted.
24 Please leave that block alone and in peace.

25 I also say no to the destruction of the

2 historic buildings that need to be preserved. They
3 are part of our tourist attraction, which supports
4 our financial infrastructure in New York City. But
5 we do need is more affordable housing, not more
6 office building space. Our homeless problem and the
7 uprise in crime will worsen if this project goes
8 through.

9 Once again, we are fighting against real
10 estate greed that is ripping out the heart and soul
11 of the greatest city in the world, New York.

12 Thank you for giving me the time to speak and
13 voice my opinion.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 At this time we will move to our -- we're
17 about to move to our next list of ten speakers.

18 But before that, the time now is 7:26 p.m.,
19 and the option to add your name to the speaker list
20 will end at 7:30 p.m. So that will end in four
21 minutes.

22 So if you are registered to speak or if you
23 have already raised your hand or dialed *9 on your
24 telephone keypad, then we have your name and you will
25 be called in the order in which you registered or

2 raised your hand. If you have not yet raised your
3 hand but you would like to speak, please do so in the
4 next -- before 7:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m. will be the
5 deadline to volunteer to register to provide verbal
6 testimony.

7 As a reminder, we do have more than 250
8 speakers. And so those who are -- who are
9 registering to speak at this time will be added to
10 the end of that speaker list, which we anticipate
11 will take several hours to hear everyone's testimony.

12 You may also submit written testimony to the
13 email or mail addresses for Empire State Development,
14 which are shown on your slide area on your screen
15 periodically.

16 As a quick reminder, the email address for
17 submitting written testimony is:
18 PennStationarea@esd.ny.gov.

19 And we also showed the mailing address
20 periodically, but it is 633 Third Avenue New York,
21 New York. And I'll call out the ZIP code next time
22 it comes by for those who are joining us by phone.

23 All right. So at this time we'll move to our
24 next list of ten registered speakers. The -- this
25 list begins with:

2 Charles Clarke;
3 Susan Clarke;
4 Marcel Negret or Negray;
5 Michelle Stoddart;
6 Laura Colacurcio;
7 Stu Daye;
8 Tina Krause;
9 Frank Craven;
10 Vincent Parco;
11 Brian McLane.
12 Out of that list of ten speakers, several are
13 absent or not present at this time. I'm going to
14 read that list, and if you're on -- if you hear your
15 name called now, we can't see you to call you to
16 speak. And so please let us know if you're
17 registered under a different name or via your phone
18 number. Please email: Help@publicworkspartners.com
19 to let us know that you are present.
20 So those registered speakers who are not
21 present at this time include:
22 Charles Clarke;
23 Michelle Stoddart;
24 Stu Daye;
25 Tina Krause;

2 Frank Craven;
3 Vincent Parco;
4 Brian McLane.

5 We'll then move to the speakers in this group
6 who -- registered speakers in this group who are
7 present, the first of whom will be Susan Clarke.

8 Susan Clarke, you may unmute your audio and
9 prepare to speak.

10 MS. CLARKE: Okay. Are we on?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

12 MS. CLARKE: Okay. Excellent. My name is
13 Susan Clarke, and I'm presenting testimony on behalf
14 of the Empire Station Coalition. We're submitting a
15 longer document, and that will be elaborating on
16 these points.

17 Our opposition to the Governor's plan is
18 based on the following issues: Number one, his plan
19 is out of compliance. The Empire Development
20 Corporation was chartered through the Urban
21 Development Corporation Act of 1968, whose original
22 purpose was to help develop the poorer neighborhoods
23 that did not have economic opportunity for
24 transportation and were considered blighted. That is
25 not the case in this area. The plan for the Penn

2 neighborhood is totally out of scope of the original
3 purpose of that act.

4 Number two, his plan ignores the actual
5 office needs of our current economy. The Draft
6 Environmental Impact Statement for this project fails
7 to consider the need for Class B and Class C office
8 space in the city, nor does it provide any data on
9 that sector of the office market. Class B and C
10 office space is a vital part of our city's
11 entrepreneurial infrastructure. Instead, we are
12 served up an economic development concept rooted in
13 the discredited luxury city idea.

14 In this case, the ambition is to replace the
15 entire area river to river with class A office space.
16 Nowhere is there consideration of an economic
17 development strategy based on adaptive reuse or to
18 support entrepreneur start-ups, small businesses and
19 a working class population, more generally. The
20 project utterly fails to develop an equitable
21 economic development strategy, preferring, instead, a
22 tired paradigm of channeling wealth to the country's
23 third-largest real estate investment trust, Vornado.

24 Second, the ESD and Vornado failed to analyze
25 scenarios based on the possibility working from home

2 may be a permanent feature of office life. The MTA
3 projected a massive reduction in the future of the
4 number of people using the subways because of this
5 trend. Why is there no analysis of this trend on the
6 possible long-term finances of this immense project?

7 Number three, wrong data. The data and
8 arguments used to portray the Penn Station
9 neighborhood as blighted rely on misleading,
10 cherry-picked data and circular reasoning. Moreover,
11 some of the so-called blight conditions have been
12 self created by Vornado's lack of investments in the
13 last few years in their area.

14 Four, this plan inaccurately portrays the
15 neighborhood. ESD fails to consider that the cause
16 of the problems of the area have nothing to do with
17 the presence of old buildings but are created by a
18 lack of maintenance of the existing areas. The Hotel
19 Penn was perfectly functional and in good use until
20 years of neglect by Vornado turned it into a
21 wasteland.

22 Number five, this plan misleads the public.
23 The project as scoped has nothing to do with tracks,
24 trains and transit improvements but has everything to
25 do with buildings towers for Larry Roth. What does

2 tearing down homes --

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

4 MS. KIRKE: -- and displacing residents have
5 to do with getting more tracks for New Jersey
6 Transit?

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be Marcel Negret or
10 Negray.

11 MR. NEGRET: Hello. Can you hear me?

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

13 MR. NEGRET: Good evening. My name is
14 Marcel Negret. I'm a senior planner with the
15 Regional Plan Association or RPA.

16 For many decades, fixing Penn Station and
17 improving the trans-Hudson commute has been a
18 significant priority for the RPA. The region had an
19 opportunity to do something historic at Penn Station,
20 so we support moving ahead with the General Project
21 Plan so that we do not lose time and momentum for the
22 long-delayed and sorely needed improvements.

23 The many outstanding issues, we believe these
24 could be addressed either within or simultaneously to
25 the GPP process. We must not lose sight that Penn

2 Station currently operates well beyond its design
3 capacity. There are many ways to increase capacity
4 at the margins, but none of them can handle the
5 anticipated passengers, including the gateway
6 program, an access and anticipated regional growth,
7 without an expansion of the station.

8 We have looked at this issue very closely.
9 More tracks and platforms will be necessary, and
10 expanding Penn Station to the south is the best and,
11 really, the only viable alternative. By increasing
12 density and planning for growth in the district
13 immediately surrounding Penn Station, we're preparing
14 for the new riders from the Hudson Tunnel project and
15 Penn Station Access.

16 To maximize benefits and best possible
17 outcomes, the expansion and renovation of Penn needs
18 to be planned and designed together as a single,
19 unified transit hub and disregard the GPP to
20 facilitate the assemblage of block 7080 needed for
21 Penn South.

22 We ultimately believe the GPP fulfills the
23 criteria required when testing the use of
24 (indecipherable) as a legitimate and needed mechanism
25 to finance capital projects. The GPP puts in place a

2 framework for renovating and expanding Penn Station
3 to the south and captures value from the private
4 investments that are enabled by the public actions.
5 In addition, providing safe oversight to (technical
6 difficulties) conducted mostly by state and regional
7 agencies will be most appropriate, something the GPP
8 also achieves.

9 The proposed plan also creates a foundation
10 that supports future planning efforts, which are
11 needed to develop a more complete vision for Penn
12 Station and the broader district, including improving
13 the urban design, public spaces and connectivity to
14 the surrounding neighborhoods. These efforts must
15 provide sufficient transparency and opportunity for
16 public input and debate. And mechanisms to ensure
17 that the commitments of private and public
18 stakeholders are fulfilled.

19 We encourage all stakeholders, including both
20 city and state agencies, to work together and start
21 exploring solutions to address these needs. We
22 cannot stress it enough: This is a
23 once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix Penn Station.
24 This means getting all players onboard and on the
25 same page to ensure the region has a necessary

2 infrastructure that meets the demands of growing into
3 the 21st century and beyond. The GPP provides a
4 vehicle for doing that.

5 Thank you so much.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be Laura Colacurcio.

9 MS. COLACURCIO: Hi, there.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. You can begin when
11 you're ready.

12 MS. COLACURCIO: Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify on behalf of the Association
14 For a Better New York.

15 My name is Laura Colacurcio, and I'm the vice
16 president at ABNY. ABNY is a nonprofit organization
17 dedicated to the healthy growth and renewal of New
18 York City's people businesses and communities. We
19 are a 50-year-old civic association representing
20 corporations, nonprofits, unions, government
21 authorities and educational, cultural and health
22 institutions. We strive to promote connections
23 between the public and private sectors to make New
24 York City a better place to live, work and visit for
25 all.

2 As ABNY focuses on New York's ongoing
3 economic recovery from the pandemic, we recognize the
4 revitalization of Penn Station as key to achieving
5 this goal. This redevelopment is a long overdue
6 priority with the potential to transform the current
7 transportation hub into one worthy of our great city
8 and presents a critical opportunity to make necessary
9 improvements to the public realm for residents,
10 workers and visitors, both old and new.

11 Governor Hochul's revised plan results from
12 engagement with stakeholders on all sides of the
13 issue, a proposal that considers residents,
14 commuters, travelers, tourists and all New Yorkers in
15 creating a Penn Station and surrounding district that
16 works for all.

17 As such, the plan includes improved
18 sidewalks, enticing retail, light and openness and
19 enhanced accessibility and way-finding. The proposed
20 improvements have the potential to boost the economy
21 and jump start tourism and will encourage office
22 workers and visitors alike to return to midtown
23 Manhattan.

24 The economic and social effects of COVID-19
25 run deep and have exposed the challenges faced by

2 small businesses and a fragile economy. The pandemic
3 has also underscored the need for a well-functioning,
4 reliable public transportation system for business
5 owners and workers alike.

6 This plan comes at a moment when our region
7 needs major investment in these critical areas to
8 help businesses and employees continue to thrive. By
9 transforming the commutes of hundreds of thousands of
10 the region's residents and creating new economic
11 potential for dozens of businesses and an entire
12 neighborhood, this plans keeps an eye on the future
13 and sends a clear message to workers that their needs
14 are recognized and prioritized.

15 ABNY supports the plan to rebuild Penn
16 Station in the surrounding district and looks forward
17 to working with Empire State Development and its
18 partners in making this vision a reality.

19 Thank you so much for your consideration.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 At this time we will move to our next list of
23 ten speakers because the remaining speakers on this
24 list have not -- are registered but are not present
25 at this time.

2 So we'll now move to our next list. The next
3 ten speakers will include:

4 Gerardo J. Velez;
5 Nancy Shafer;
6 David Byron;
7 Denice Yaney;
8 John Goodlow;
9 Tommy DeVito;
10 Gail Davis;
11 Lynn Neugebauer;
12 Sylvia Syracuse;
13 And Ambur Nicosia.

14 Of that list, there are a few registered
15 speakers who are not currently present on the call.
16 When I call those names, if you are present, please
17 let us know via the help@publicworkspartners.com
18 email address if you are present under a different
19 name or telephone number.

20 So those who are not currently on the call
21 include:

22 Gerardo J. Velez;
23 David Byron;
24 John Goodlow;
25 and Sylvia Syracuse.

2 If any of those people or representatives are
3 present, please let us know via the
4 help@publicworkspartners.com email address.

5 So at this time, our first speaker on this --
6 out of this group will be Nancy Shafer.

7 Nancy Shafer, you may unmute your audio and
8 let us know when you're ready to begin. All right.
9 We can see you. If you can unmute.

10 MS. SHAFER: Can you hear me?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

12 MS. SHAFER: Hi, my name is Nancy Shaver, and
13 I'm a Maryland resident. And I'm very good friends
14 with Stevie Marshall, who is a musician in New York.
15 And I met him through social media a few years ago.

16 I just want to say he's kept me informed on
17 what's going on in the neighborhood that he lives in
18 there and this proposal. And what I want to say is
19 I'm very well-versed in -- I'm losing my train of
20 thought. Bear with me.

21 I come from a family of engineers where they
22 do master planning and deal with, you know, land
23 acquisitions and so on and so forth. And if you
24 Google Maryland and Ellicott City proper, you will
25 see what happened to that area, which is historic

2 buildings and along the same premise.

3 And, unfortunately, you know, at the time
4 it -- nothing -- they couldn't stop what happened
5 there, and we lost a lot of the historic buildings
6 from colonial times. And then on the flip side, in
7 Baltimore city, we had Camden and Fells Point and
8 Federal Hill. And there's been a lot of
9 revitalization, and I feel like it is so important
10 for the fabric of the area.

11 It's the people; it's the buildings; it's the
12 neighborhood. That is what makes communities, and I
13 hope that this proposal, this plan, is put on pause
14 and that they get some kind of visionary, engineer or
15 architect, someone to come up with a better plan so
16 they're not destroying this neighborhood. I
17 understand it needs improvement, but there is a way
18 to accomplish that. And that's what I want to say.
19 Thank you.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony. Our next speaker will Denice Yaney.

22 Denice Yaney, you may unmute your audio and
23 let us know when you're ready to begin.

24 MS. YANEY: Hello.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can see and

2 hear you and you can begin when you're ready.

3 MS. YANEY: Thank you very much.

4 Hi, I'm Denice Yaney. I live on 30th Street.
5 I've been living here 45 years come June, and the
6 thing about this neighborhood that is so special is
7 that it's not special. There's delis, there's little
8 cafes, lots of places to eat and grab a bite to eat.
9 And what we're missing with this whole redevelopment
10 is that the one place that is not going to have any
11 construction on it is Penn Station. And that's where
12 the focus should be. You don't need to tear down
13 St. John's Church or the bridge to -- the old
14 Gimbel's Bridge.

15 We don't need to tear up what's here. We
16 need to let this exist and only work on Penn Station
17 itself. I think that's a great idea, even the park
18 on the other side of the -- of the post office is a
19 nice idea. But down below, we're a neighborhood and
20 we live here. We're not just people who come into
21 the area, work and go home. This is our home.

22 Thanks so much for your time, and I
23 appreciate this opportunity very much. It's been
24 interesting. Thank you.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your

2 testimony.

3 Our next speaker will be Tommy DeVito.

4 Tommy DeVito, you may unmute your audio. Let
5 us know when you're ready to speak.

6 (No response.)

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Do we have a Tommy
8 DeVito? A registered speaker who is present.

9 (No response.)

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Tommy DeVito, if
11 you are -- if you do hear this, please let us know.

12 I'll move on then to the next speaker, Gail
13 Davis. Gail Davis, you may unmute your audio and get
14 ready to speak.

15 Hi, Gail Davis. We can see you, and I think
16 you're unmuted as well.

17 MS. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you. I don't see
18 myself but that's okay.

19 I applaud the goal, as I believe everybody
20 whose spoken has applauded the goal of improving Penn
21 Station as a transportation hub, but I'm strongly
22 opposed and disagree with the proposal of the Empire
23 State Development Corps for the construction of ten
24 huge, largely commercial and office towers around
25 Penn Station for the following reasons and analysis:

2 I believe we need through-running with
3 trains, which means that trains will pass through
4 Penn Station and turn around outside of New York in
5 New Jersey, Westchester, Queens, in those kinds of
6 areas. And I think it will help with the whole train
7 situation and the hub of Penn Station. It will allow
8 for Penn Station to be much less congested, and
9 almost all of the tracks will be able to be above
10 ground rather than underground. This is what I
11 understand.

12 This is a newer concept that is being used in
13 the most modern mass transit renovations that are
14 happening throughout the world, and I think that's
15 what should happen in New York, which is such a
16 poor-looking city.

17 I also believe that Madison Square Garden
18 should be relocated. Its lease should not be
19 renewed, and it should pay its fair share of taxes
20 and contributions to the city and state budget. It
21 is truly an eyesore rather than a historic place that
22 it would try to assume to be. And the city would
23 greatly benefit from its relocation and rebuilding
24 and lack of congestion. And it would allow for an
25 aboveground Penn Station and restore the former

2 footprint of Penn Station to its original grandeur.

3 I have lived on 30th Street for almost 30
4 years. I love my neighborhood and my neighbors. I
5 believe it functions very well with some small and
6 larger residential and commercial and office spaces
7 that allow for a neighborhood of mom-and-pop stores
8 and a lot of resources to exist side by side as the
9 city has developed.

10 And I believe New York City and New York
11 State should cherish the -- and especially brace and
12 encourage such small business development rather than
13 supporting this land grab by Vornado.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

15 MS. DAVIS: From what I understand -- I'm
16 sorry?

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Sorry. Ten seconds.

18 MS. DAVIS: Okay. I believe New York is a
19 historic city because it has its culture. I think
20 that New York, we should -- in the transitional times
21 of this during COVID --

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you, Gail Davis.
23 I'm sorry, the time has -- the time has been
24 completed. And if you'd like to submit additional
25 written testimony, please do so via the email or

2 written -- sorry, U.S. mail addresses.

3 Our next speaker will be Lynn Neugebauer.

4 Lynn Neugebauer, if you are -- okay. We can
5 see you if you'd like to unmute. Let us know when
6 you're ready to begin.

7 MS. NEUGEBAUER: Okay. Can you hear me?

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

9 MS. NEUGEBAUER: Thank you. I'm a native New
10 Yorker, Lynn Neugebauer. I've lived here my entire
11 life. I lived here in the neighborhood, and I live
12 in Penn South on Eighth Avenue and 28th Street. So
13 this is my neighborhood that this plan would
14 basically destroy.

15 I've lived here a number of years. I've seen
16 a lot of small businesses go as the neighborhood
17 becomes more and more and gentrified, like affordable
18 restaurants, bodegas we used to shop, pharmacies and
19 stuff. And I heard that this plan is to going cause
20 us about 1,200 small businesses are going to go out.

21 It's my opinion we don't need another Hudson
22 Yards. When I walk over there whether from where I
23 live, it's all about luxury shopping, places that
24 most of us in the neighborhood could never in a
25 million years afford to shop. That's what's

2 basically going to happen if this Vornado plan goes
3 through.

4 So I appreciate the time that you're giving
5 me to talk about, it and I really hope that this plan
6 fails. Thank you.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be Ambur Nicosia.

10 Ambur Nicosia, we saw briefly. There you
11 are.

12 MS. NICOSIA: Hi, good evening. My name is
13 Ambur Nicosia. I'm the president of the Penn South.
14 Penn South is the largest affordable co-op in the
15 area. We cover six square blocks, 20 acres just
16 south of the proposed area from 29th Street to 23rd
17 Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenue. We have
18 approximately 5,000 residents in fifteen buildings
19 and 25 commercial tenants.

20 We have a board of directors of fifteen
21 residents and a co-op counsel of 45 residents. And
22 I'm here today because they unanimously asked me to
23 come and speak out in opposition to this project in
24 its current form.

25 Our concern is that the plan will permanently

2 alter the neighborhood and do little for the
3 residents who are currently living here while making
4 accommodations for residents that the plan hopes to
5 gain in the future. The ten buildings are far too
6 large for this community to absorb, both physically
7 and in terms of its lasting impact.

8 Our small businesses, which are the backbone
9 of our community are already vulnerable in their
10 current situation. I mean, because of the vacancy
11 rates that are too high and the neighborhood putting
12 additional pressure on them. This is even before
13 COVID. Now we're at a record, approximately
14 18 percent vacancy rate for commercial. So the idea
15 of proposing a primarily commercial plan is never
16 going to go over well in this community.

17 We have empty storefronts along all of the
18 avenues which are causing both safety issues and
19 quality of life concerns. In particular, for our
20 residents, there's been no plan that's been put into
21 place that realistically solves the permanent impact
22 that is south of the complex. We're talking about
23 increased traffic and congestion, air and noise
24 pollution, light and air limits and significant
25 safety concerns for the number of our residents that

2 use the bike lanes.

3 This plan addresses those concerns only in
4 the most immediate area that would be impacted by the
5 replacement of these buildings and not the
6 surrounding community.

7 Furthermore, the level of frustration that we
8 feel that this is a completely missed opportunity.
9 We need more permanent affordable housing, true
10 permanent affordable housing with a replacement of
11 the current AMI. We need supportive housing to get
12 people into treatment and off the streets. We need
13 more schools space so that we can solve the large
14 class sizes that we're currently dealing with in this
15 community.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

17 MS. NICOSIA: We need community
18 healthcare-based facilities.

19 There is an opportunity to solve all of those
20 issues in this plan and none them are being
21 addressed. And I urge you please, take these
22 comments and come back with the solution that's going
23 to positively impact this district.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

2 So at this time we will move to our next
3 list, our next group of ten registered speakers.
4 We'll show that on the screen in just a moment, but,
5 also, I'll begin reading the next ten registered
6 speakers' names:

7 Stuart Lee;
8 Yvonne Morrow;
9 Sherrie Murphy;
10 Marge Othrow;
11 Joseph Clift;
12 Patricia Kirshner;
13 Charisma White;
14 Helen Rosenberg;
15 William Schaffner;
16 and Rebecca Taub.

17 Out of that list, we have a few registered
18 speakers who are not present. If you are or
19 represent one of the following names off this list,
20 please us at help@publicworkspartners.com. And those
21 names are:

22 Stuart Leigh;
23 Marge Othrow;
24 Joseph Clift;
25 and Charisma White.

2 Those four registered speakers are currently
3 not present on the Zoom. Please let us know if you
4 are or represent one of those speakers.

5 So we'll move on to the first speaker who is
6 present, Yvonne Morrow.

7 Yvonne Morrow, you may unmute your audio and
8 let us know when you're ready to speak.

9 MS. MORROW: I'm ready.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great.

11 MS. DAVIS: Hi. My name is Yvonne Morrow,
12 and I'm a resident of Penn South, the large middle
13 income housing complex just south of Penn Station in
14 Chelsea. I'm speaking at this public hearing to
15 voice my strong opposition to the proposal by the
16 Empire State Development Corporation known as the
17 Pennsylvania Station Area Project.

18 The people of Chelsea are well-known to voice
19 their opinions loud and clear. As an example, we
20 rose up again the West Side Stadium proposed to be
21 built in West Chelsea and won. Instead, however, we
22 got the Hudson Yards mega complex. The jury is still
23 out on whether or not that was a good replacement.
24 In fact, the developments of Hudson Yards was just
25 the beginning of the quest by the development

2 community to create a large swath of very tall
3 commercial buildings and massive market-rate housing
4 developments across Manhattan from the Hudson River
5 to the East River.

6 In order to achieve the proposed plan, at
7 least 50 existing buildings filled with apartments
8 and small businesses would be demolished. One of
9 these buildings contains my most favorite Irish pub
10 in Manhattan, Molly Wee, located on the northeast
11 corner of 30th Street and Eighth Avenue. Just look
12 at this beautiful little gem of a building, built in
13 1900. Why would anyone want to demolish it? Hello?
14 Why does Manhattan need more mega commercial
15 developments?

16 If our more-than-two-year pandemic has taught
17 us anything, it is that thousands upon thousands of
18 workers, especially in the financial services area,
19 prefer to work from home. Having, you know, some
20 millions of square feet of empty commercial space,
21 what we do not need are millions of square feet of
22 new commercial and market-rate housing space.

23 What we do need are liveable communities
24 comprised of small neighborhood businesses and
25 affordable, really affordable housing. And what we

2 do need are plans to improve and develop a Penn
3 Station complex which is cheaper and much less
4 destructive to communities, such as those explored by
5 the Empire Station Coalition, the ESC.

6 It's imperative that you begin immediately to
7 work with ESC. If I had more time I would carry on
8 about the huge impacts the super-colossal development
9 project would have on the West Harlem Sewage
10 Treatment Plant. I do not. Therefore, I will leave
11 it for all of you to ponder. Thank you.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Our next speaker will be Sherrie Murphy.

15 Sherrie Murphy, if you are present, you may
16 unmute your audio and let us know when you're ready
17 to begin. Sherrie Murphy.

18 (No response.)

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll move on to
20 our next speaker. Our next registered speaker who is
21 present is Patricia Kirshner.

22 Patricia Kirshner, you may unmute your audio.

23 MS. KIRSHNER: Hi, there.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. You may begin when
25 you're ready.

2 MS. KIRSHNER: I'm just so interested to hear
3 from so many of my neighbors. I live on 28th Street,
4 closer to Sixth, and also (technical difficulties)
5 had our troubles here too.

6 Somebody -- I had a nice prepared statement,
7 but I think what I want to do is actually read the
8 New York Times article this morning, "Hochul Amassed
9 a Campaign Fortune, Here's Who it Came From. Kathy
10 Hochul's record-setting \$21.6 million in donations
11 flowed from a who's whos of New York's special
12 interests." It's by Nicholas Fandos.

13 "Last November, when many of Manhattan's
14 skyscrapers sat half-empty, Governor Kathy Hochul
15 made a high-stakes wager on New York City's
16 commercial real estate industry: She vowed to move
17 ahead with a marquee plan to restore Pennsylvania
18 Station and erect new office towers around it. For
19 Manhattans make the rich real estate developers, the
20 announcement signaled Ms. Hochul's support for the
21 kind of grand projects that foretell a windfall, and
22 some found a concrete way of showing their approval
23 to the new governor.

24 "In the weeks that followed, Ms. Hochul's
25 campaign received checks for \$69,700, the legal

2 limit, from some of the city's biggest real estate
3 executives, including Steven Roth of Vornado Realty
4 Trust, which positioned -- which is positioned to
5 directly benefit from the project that he once called
6 a Promised Land. Other checks trickled in from
7 developers, builders, engineers and even some who
8 opposed it."

9 "Campaign contributions flowed from a broader
10 spigot of cash turned on last fall by New York's
11 varied special interests, from real estate and
12 building trades to hospitals, labor unions, gaming
13 companies, directed towards Ms. Hochul's election
14 campaign.

15 The donations included \$200,000 in checks
16 from the family behind a major construction firm with
17 millions in state contracts. \$47,000 that was tied
18 to a gaming giant leaning on the state to expand
19 legal gambling, \$41,000 traced back to a single
20 Albany lobbyist. The funds helped" -- real estate --
21 I'm going to skip some of this.

22 "There has been no evidence that the
23 contributions from Mr. Roth and other developers were
24 directly related to Ms. Hochul's Penn Station plan,
25 but those and others may still prompt scrutiny about

2 her decision-making as she negotiates the state's
3 \$216 billion budget.

4 "It's not like this isn't a problem, it's a
5 well-trod path," said Blair Horner, the executive
6 director of the New York Public Interest Research
7 Group, which pushes for tighter campaign finance
8 laws. "She's running through it instead of just
9 walking.

10 "More than 95 percent of the funds she
11 collected came from donors who gave \$1,000 or more,
12 according to a review of publicly available campaign
13 filings, despite her claims pulling in a lot of small
14 donations."

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

16 MS. KIRSHNER: Sure. What's next.

17 Anyway, I'm opposed to this development plan
18 as it is. Penn Station needs work. We don't need
19 office buildings. And we need to figure out a way of
20 maintaining the communities that live around here.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 Our next speaker -- excuse me just a
24 moment -- I believe will be Helen Rosenberg.

25 (No response.)

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me. I'm sorry.
3 I'm just getting a message. Yes, Sherrie Murphy.
4 Sherrie Murphy has now -- registered speaker who is
5 now present.

6 So Sherrie Murphy, you may unmute and go
7 ahead and start your testimony when you're ready.

8 MS. MURPHY: Can you hear me?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can. You can
10 start when you're ready.

11 MS. MURPHY: My name is Sherrie Murphy. And
12 I'm not an architect, and nor am I a resident of any
13 of the 2,300 apartments that will be evicted if
14 Governor Hochul's plan for Penn Station is enacted.
15 But I have lived in New York for decades, and I have
16 learned to care for the architecture of this city.

17 For 20 years, I was the vice president of
18 publicity director for Rizzoli International
19 Publications and bookstores. We published monographs
20 on just about every major architect practicing in the
21 second half of the 20th century; Robert A.M. Stern,
22 Charles Gwathmey, Philip Johnson, Richard Meier,
23 Michael Graves and on and on, prompting Ada Louise
24 Huxtable, the architecture critic of the New York
25 Times at that time, to congratulate Rizzoli on

2 becoming the leading architecture book publisher in
3 America in relatively short time. I developed a
4 profound respect for architecture, the most permanent
5 of all the arts.

6 I was truly shocked to learn that the Draft
7 and Environmental Impact Statement for the Penn
8 Station area lists 38 buildings in the area as being
9 eligible for New York City, New York State and/or
10 National Register landmark designation.

11 At the very least, before Governor Hochul's
12 plan can be enacted, the New York City Landmarks
13 Preservation Commission should hold hearings on the
14 13 buildings sited as eligible for being designated
15 New York City landmarks.

16 I am vehemently opposed to Governor Hochul's
17 current plan. Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony. Our next registered speaker is
20 William Schaffner.

21 William Schaffner, you may unmute your audio
22 and let us know when you're ready to begin.

23 MR. SCHAFFNER: I'm ready.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We can hear you.

25 MR. SCHAFFNER: In the late 19th century

2 until about the middle of the 20th century, it seemed
3 necessary to manufacture products in New York City
4 until it didn't.

5 After that time, the buildings used for that
6 purpose were left vacant and either repurposed or
7 demolished. I believe we are now experiencing
8 another paradigmatic change. It may be really,
9 really, really desired that large numbers of people
10 come into New York on a daily basis to work in
11 offices, but that won't make it happen again.

12 Many companies who lease in Manhattan are
13 feeling the effects of the success of their employees
14 working from home amidst the pandemic and are
15 reassessing their need for office space. I will now
16 remind you of the millions and millions and millions
17 of square feet of office space that already exist.

18 I understand the need for necessary repairs
19 and renovations to the rail lines coming into Penn
20 Station, as well as the pedestrian accesses to them.
21 But I believe that the incredible success of Moynihan
22 Train Hall and the way it was created by repurposing
23 the Farley Post Office gives us a viable template for
24 these projects.

25 The many classic buildings that surround Penn

2 Station can and should be repurposed imaginatively
3 instead of being demolished wholesale. Unremarkable
4 glass-covered, 90-plus story monoliths that will be
5 50 percent vacant in the foreseeable future should
6 not be built because we failed to have the
7 imagination to consider other alternatives.

8 These buildings are being proposed by people
9 laboring under the illusion that they are building
10 Houston on the Hudson instead of a revitalized New
11 York-freaking-City.

12 No one in New York is enthusiastic about
13 being part of a Vornado campus unless they are paid
14 to do so. We are told this is a once in a generation
15 opportunity. I couldn't agree more, and I urge you
16 to be remarkable and not squander this opportunity on
17 a unremarkable outcome that will be reviled for
18 generations. Thank you.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Our next speaker will be Rebecca Taub.

22 MS. TAUB: Okay. I think -- yeah, I want to
23 support and reiterate all the other testimony of
24 people who oppose this project, the demolition of
25 Penn Station was a tragedy and the architectural

2 consequences of this project will be a travesty of
3 even greater proportion.

4 We have the Hudson Yards project sitting
5 mostly empty, and that was built over a train yard;
6 so it's not very attractive. It looks like any other
7 modern megalith. But we didn't really lose anything.

8 But here we have all these beautiful
9 historic, traditional New York buildings that are
10 going to be destroyed, and people don't come to New
11 York to have the same ugly megaliths. They come to
12 New York to be in New York. This is going to be a
13 terrible mistake. They're putting the cart before
14 the horse for this gamble that the financial plan
15 will enrich the state and enable further
16 transportation developments. But the developments
17 have to be paid for by something more secure than a
18 gamble that will absolutely be sure to just enrich
19 the real estate.

20 And the only blight in this neighborhood is
21 the human blight of all the homeless and mentally
22 ill. And no matter what they build, we will have
23 people in need of supportive services who cluster
24 around the public transportation because they have
25 nowhere else to go.

2 So I hope that the priorities are not just
3 financial and will actually go to serve the people of
4 New York. Thank you very much.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 We'll now move to our next list of ten
8 speakers. And I'll read the list of ten speakers,
9 and it's also showing on your screen.

10 The next list of registered speakers is:

11 Lynn Mallinson;

12 Adrinne Andi Sosin;

13 Caitlin Cahil;

14 Sarah Gallagher;

15 Luana Green;

16 Amy Davidow;

17 Regina Olff;

18 Judy Wessler;

19 Ruther Conner;

20 Howard Charles Yourow, S.J.D.

21 Out of that list, we have a few registered
22 speakers who are not currently present. If you are
23 one of the folks that I read now or a representative,
24 please email help@publicworkspartners.com to let us
25 know the name or phone number under which you are

2 present in the meeting:

3 Sarah Gallagher;

4 Luana Green;

5 Amy Davidow;

6 Regina Olff;

7 Judy Wessler;

8 Ruth Conner;

9 Howard Charles Yourow; S.J.D.

10 If any of you are currently in the meeting,
11 please email help@publicworkspartners.com.

12 So at this time, we will begin with
13 Lynn Mallinson.

14 Lynn Mallinson, you may let us know when
15 you're ready to give your testimony.

16 MS. MALLINSON: Okay. Start my video. Okay
17 I'm ready. Can you hear me?

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear and
19 see you.

20 MS. MALLINSON: All right. I will try to be
21 as succinct, if not as eloquent, as many of my
22 predecessors.

23 I just felt it was important as a member of
24 the community that lives in the neighborhood just
25 south of the Penn Station that it is true, it is a

2 blight and it needs to be fixed; and the sooner, the
3 better. And it is an embarrassment.

4 And that said, this particular plan, I
5 believe, is not the one that should take precedence,
6 and I don't believe it should be rammed down our
7 throats, which I believe it is going to potentially
8 be.

9 Without hearing -- and I hope that
10 everybody's testimony's today will be taken into
11 consideration, you know, because I do feel it's very,
12 very important. Like everybody else said, I'm
13 probably repeating everybody else, but we don't need
14 more office space. We don't need more monoliths
15 taking the light. We need more green spaces, not
16 these monolithic buildings in concrete.

17 We need places to live. The affordable
18 housing issue is a huge one, and it's laughable that
19 the number of affordable housing spots that have been
20 allotted to this gigantic enterprise is a drop in
21 the proverbial -- not even a bucket, in a teaspoon.
22 Because it's -- they're getting such a huge benefit
23 from -- for the next probably hundred or so years and
24 the community is going to suffer for it if there's no
25 space for us to live.

2 There will be no neighborhood, and there will
3 be nothing to come and visit because there are no
4 mom-and-pop restaurants anymore. There are no small
5 businesses, or they're becoming fewer and fewer.
6 There's fewer places for artists to live.

7 I don't even know where my daughter is going
8 to live. She would love to have her own apartment in
9 the city and is in the arts and can't afford it. And
10 like the musicians that came before, there's so
11 little work spaces. So I'd like to see provision
12 made for people who did have business in the area to
13 be provided for. But we certainly don't need the
14 amount of concrete and glass that's going to be going
15 up and blocking out all of the sun. And -- and it's
16 really, you know, pitiful to spend our tax dollars on
17 something that's not going to benefit the public.

18 And let's see what else. Again, also
19 speaking to the landmarks. I mean, that's one of the
20 things that makes the neighborhood a neighborhood, is
21 the interesting architecture. If you're going to be
22 glass and concrete, what's -- what's the point,
23 there's going to be nothing here to look at.

24 And -- and also with regard to the Zoom
25 economy, so many people have said right now there's

2 so much empty office space, why do we need more.
3 Hudson Yards is still not even fully occupied. And
4 what happened to all that affordable housing? I
5 don't know anybody who moved into that neighborhood.

6 So I'd like to know exactly what the plans
7 are for relocating the people in around the
8 neighborhood and what are the plans for supportive
9 housing and supportive services because, as somebody
10 just said, these locations -- the transportation hubs
11 are a locus for people who need those types of
12 services instead of --

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
14 for your testimony. If you'd like to submit
15 additional testimony, feel free to submit written
16 testimony via email or the U.S. mail address.

17 Our next speaker will Adrienne or Andi Sosin.

18 MS. SOSIN: I'm going to try to start my
19 video. Can you hear me?

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can both see
21 and hear you. Begin when you're ready.

22 MS. SOSIN: Thank you. I thank you for the
23 opportunity to speak on this.

24 I would like to register my opposition to the
25 current plan. I think it needs a lot more thought.

2 I want to speak in favor of the historic preservation
3 of the buildings that are still able to be preserved.
4 It has come to my attention that the Hotel
5 Pennsylvania is being dismantled as we speak, and I
6 think that is a travesty. I think that it's very
7 important for New York City to retain its unique
8 architecture, and those buildings that are under
9 discussion for being demolished are worthy of
10 preservation.

11 I do not think this plan is the right thing
12 to have in this neighborhood. I live in Downtown
13 Manhattan, but I use -- I actually was at Madison
14 Square Garden last night. So I think that the Garden
15 itself is a very distinctive building, but what is
16 more important is the use of the area. I do not want
17 to live in a glass and steel city that has no
18 distinct history or architecture. And so I think
19 that the historic preservation needs -- is much more
20 important in the long-term benefit to the city.

21 I am hearing that there would be many
22 residents and businesses displaced by this project.
23 I am opposed to this kind of speculative building in
24 favor of developers.

25 And thank you for your time; and, hopefully,

2 the overwhelming opposition to this by citizens will
3 be listened to. Thank you.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Our next speaker is Caitlin Cahill.

7 Caitlin Cahill, you may unmute your audio and
8 let us know when you've ready to begin.

9 MS. CAHILL: Hi. Hi, I'm Caitlin Cahill,
10 can you hear me?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

12 MS. CAHILL: Okay. Great. So I'm another
13 lucky person who has affordable housing in the
14 community. I live at Penn South, a limited equity
15 cooperative just south of Penn Station. I lived here
16 as a high school student. I graduated in Madison
17 Square Garden, used Penn Station to go to high school
18 in the Bronx.

19 And I join my neighbors, and as the speaker
20 just said, the overwhelming opposition to this plan,
21 we're really concerned about preserving our
22 affordable neighborhood without the displacement of
23 our neighbors and the secondary displacement.

24 We deserve an aboveground accessible Penn
25 Station. We do not need to sell off land for office

2 towers that we do not need. I think that's really
3 clear. When we look at the plans that keep clashing
4 up on the Zoom, what jumps out? The office towers.

5 What do the office towers have to do with
6 Penn Station? We don't need them. This is the time
7 to act, and we need to do the right thing. We can
8 get government funding now. There's funding for
9 infrastructure. We do not need to sell our city off
10 and our democracy to real estate development in order
11 to improve Penn Station. We all want a better Penn
12 Station, but this looks and smells like corruption.
13 The neighborhood is against this plan, and we want
14 our government officials to oppose this more strongly
15 and to take action.

16 So, you know, who also lived at Penn Station
17 was Bayard Rustin, the great civil rights organizer.
18 And he was a housing organizer. Economic rights are
19 civil rights. And let's talk about housing,
20 especially in this pandemic. So we're already
21 gentrified here. And the communities have been
22 disinvested.

23 In our own development at Penn South, there
24 has been -- the kinds of -- we've been forced to sell
25 off some of our land to NAG to -- there's the land

2 grab that's happening all over our community. We're
3 in a housing crisis. How can ESD and Governor Hochul
4 justify this land grant?

5 The eviction moratorium expired this past
6 weekend. Why hasn't Governor Hochul signed the Good
7 Cause Eviction Bill? Here's a not-so-secret secret:
8 Corruption.

9 From the New York Times last week, many of
10 the state's largest real estate developments like
11 Stephen Ross of Related Company and Steven Roth of
12 Vornado have cut five-figure checks. So have
13 builders reliant on massive state-funded
14 infrastructure projects. We want state funding in
15 NYCHA, right? And we want -- we want funding for
16 supportive services for work force development for
17 our unhoused community members.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Fifteen seconds.

19 MS. CAHILL: Yes. So Hochul in the -- it
20 came out today, has made a high-stakes wager on New
21 York City's commercial real estate industry. Don't
22 do it.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 At this time, we'll move to our next list of

2 ten speakers. And I'll read the names of these
3 registered speakers first:

4 Renzo Ramirez;

5 Jean Ryan;

6 Karim Ahmed;

7 Rob Stoner;

8 Howard Hemsley;

9 Lance Barbarino;

10 Livvie Mann;

11 Rosalie Regal;

12 James Smith;

13 and Lynn Ellsworth.

14 So out of that list of ten names, a few are
15 absent. If your name is called in this list and you
16 hear it, please let us know via
17 help@publicworkspartners.com with the name or phone
18 number under which you are present.

19 Rob Stoner;

20 Livvie Mann;

21 Rosalie Regal;

22 James Smith.

23 So I'll begin with the first registered
24 speaker who is present, Renzo Ramirez.

25 Renzo Ramirez -- yep, there you are. You may

2 begin when you're ready.

3 MR. RAMIREZ: You guys can hear me?

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

5 MR. RAMIREZ: All right. Cool. Good
6 evening. My name is Renzo Ramriez, and I work as a
7 doorman. And I'm also here on behalf of my union,
8 32BJ and the 85,000 building service workers that
9 32BJ represents in New York City to express our
10 support for this GPP.

11 We are enthusiastic about this project not
12 only because it will create good jobs that give
13 workers mobility and security, but also because its
14 stands to deliver many other public benefits.

15 To continue to thrive, New York City needs,
16 and New Yorkers deserve, world class transportation
17 infrastructure. And we know that the proposed
18 improvements to Penn Station will benefit working New
19 Yorkers like 32BJ who rely heavy on the public
20 transportation.

21 And in addition, we are enthusiastic about
22 the redevelopment's potential to provide many new
23 units of affordable housing in an expensive part of
24 Manhattan.

25 New Yorkers like 32BJ need quality housing

2 they can afford, located near employment
3 opportunities and public transit. We are eager to
4 work with other stakeholders to ensure that any
5 residential development built as a result of this
6 redevelopment comes with prevailing wage for building
7 service workers.

8 We hope that the state will make a commitment
9 to making this part of the final plan for the
10 redevelopment. We are confident that if done right,
11 this development will do much for workers and the
12 broader community. We respectfully urge ESD to
13 approve it.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Our next speaker will be Jean Ryan.

17 MS. RYAN: Hi.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi.

19 MS. RYAN: Yes, I am Jean Ryan. I'm
20 president of Disabled in Action of Metropolitan New
21 York, DIA for short, and I'm a wheelchair user.

22 First, you have a public hearing and you have
23 what you think are cool slides with text overlaying a
24 background of a photo of a crowded city. They are
25 hard to read for people like me with vision problems.

2 You should just have the text and nothing behind it,
3 nothing underneath it.

4 Then you refuse to have closed captioning.
5 That makes it hard for people like me with hearing
6 loss to follow the conversation. It's imperative
7 that you make your hearings accessible to people with
8 all kinds of disabilities. You could have made
9 closed captioning optional to turn on, but it has
10 been disabled. Not everyone with hearing loss can
11 use ASL. We expect better slides and closing caption
12 in all the next hearings.

13 We need a good train station with a good
14 access for everyone. Keeping Madison Square Garden
15 where it is now is like having an elephant in the
16 living room. No matter how many entrances and nice
17 furnishings you put in, the elephant is still there.
18 I have no doubt that some version of this project
19 will go forward.

20 When it does, do we really need a great deal
21 more office space for people who will be working at
22 least part-time from home? There's a true need for
23 middle income and affordable housing and a lot of it.

24 I've used Penn Station since 1963 before
25 Amtrak was formed. It has always been difficult; but

2 in a wheelchair, it's almost impossible. If DOT,
3 Amtrak, the MTA and Vornado don't work together, we
4 will never get something truly accessible.

5 As it is, wheelchair users cannot find the
6 elevators and need to be led like children to our
7 trains. If we want to get out in Penn Station, we're
8 sometimes -- we've sometimes been trapped on the
9 trains without access to a bridge plate for 30
10 minutes, hoping that we don't get stuck on a moving
11 train and have to go someplace else when we wanted to
12 get out in Penn Station.

13 One group has to be in charge to coordinate
14 everything. One agency cannot just work on their own
15 plan and hope that the other agencies will do their
16 part and they'll coordinate together somehow. What
17 good would it do if we have lots of new elevators to
18 get into Penn Station and then can't get around
19 inside the building?

20 Way-finding is very important and signs are
21 part of that. Please think about someone who has
22 never been there before who is trying to find their
23 way. Don't think like a regular commuter is not
24 disabled and is very familiar with getting around.

25 Lastly, we don't see anything wrong with many

2 old buildings. They have character. Thank you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Our next speaker will be Karim Ahmed.

6 MR. AHMED: Good evening. My name is Karim
7 Ahmed. I'm a lifelong New Yorker and architect
8 living and working in the Bronx, and I'm opposed due
9 to serious concerns over the fundamental structure of
10 the studies around the Penn GPP.

11 The study is represented as a land use
12 redevelopment plan used to justify paying for a
13 transit improvement, but this is putting the cart
14 before the horse. In reality, transit improvements
15 like gateway are necessary to maintain the northeast
16 corridor, a geographic region which provides 25
17 percent of the nation's GDP and provide long overdue
18 increases in service that need to be done in order to
19 avoid catastrophic losses in the metropolitan area.

20 They should not and cannot be held at the
21 mercy of a development plan that, even by the state's
22 admission, under the rosier circumstances would not
23 provide enough revenue to pay for the transit
24 improvements. However, the study proposes to use
25 eminent domain to acquire land for those developments

2 under the guise of transit because the project is
3 being placed on the same site with the transit
4 belowground and the development aboveground.

5 In previous hearings and town halls, I have
6 witnessed confusing question-and-answer sessions
7 wherein the different state agencies deferred
8 responsibility for the eminent domain to other
9 agencies but overlooked that those bureaucratic
10 answers do nothing to help people affected by these
11 proposed projects.

12 The station location is not the only way to
13 preserve the northeast corridor, and linking these
14 proposals in a vicious cycle attempts to present a
15 solution which looks neat but is at the expense of
16 local residents, businesses, commuters and New York
17 taxpayers.

18 This is not helped by the constant rebranding
19 and changing scope of the study, which makes it
20 difficult for anyone who is not fully -- who is not
21 employed full-time on the studies to keep up with
22 what's considered a part of it.

23 Even during this hearing tonight,
24 well-intentioned speakers have testified in support
25 of the overall project, citing various parts of

2 transit projects such as Penn Access and urban
3 improvement projects such as pedestrianizing the
4 streets. They are not inherent to other elements
5 such as the office development and the eminent
6 domain, further evidence of the obscured scope of
7 this project.

8 The different pieces of the Penn Station GPP
9 need to be studied and presented under their own
10 merits, not as confusingly bound package. Thank you
11 very much.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Our next speaker will be Howard Hemsley.
15 Howard Hemsley, you unmute your audio and let us know
16 when you're ready to begin.

17 All right. We can see your video, Howard
18 Hemsley. And I believe you are unmuted as well.

19 MR. HEMSLEY: Okay. Good evening. This is
20 Howard Hemsley, and I have been a community organizer
21 for over 30 years. And I come (indecipherable) like
22 this irrespective of the people involved and small
23 businesses involved.

24 When I first encountered this proposal, my
25 initial reaction was the emperor has no clothes, the

2 emperor has no clothes. Why isn't anyone saying
3 this? Are we seriously considering building ten
4 skyscrapers for a plan that is ineffectual and does
5 not work? It's a joke. This is the biggest land
6 giveaway since the Dutch bought Manhattan from the
7 Indians for a handful of beads.

8 Looking at the Penn Station plan for its
9 (indecipherable). First of all, Madison Square
10 Garden has been moved three times before in its
11 storied history. It will move again whenever
12 commercial situations demand it. There's nothing
13 sacred about Madison Square Garden. But we sit here,
14 talking about what we can do to fix the problems of
15 Penn Station.

16 I've seen people travel and I've seen train
17 stations out of order; and in the United States,
18 train stations are soaring experiences that unite us
19 that (indecipherable) this is (indecipherable) how
20 can we settle for (indecipherable) anything less.

21 I want to thank everyone who sat here for
22 these hours of hearings and especially those who live
23 in the effected area.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

2 Our next speaker will be Barbarino, who may
3 no longer be present.

4 Lance Barbarino, if you are present, please
5 signal to us or unmute yourself to let us know.

6 (No response.)

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. So our next
8 registered speaker who is present is Lynn Ellsworth.
9 Can you let us know when you're ready to speak?

10 MS. ELLSWORTH: I'm ready. Can you hear me?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

12 MS. ELLSWORTH: I'm Lynn Ellsworth with the
13 Empire Station Coalition.

14 I have a Ph.D. in economics with a
15 specialization in economic development. I believe
16 that the project concept and choice of project site
17 violate the UDC Act. Section 2 of the enabling
18 legislation for the ESD tells the agency to find
19 urban areas that are economically suffering that lack
20 public transportation, are isolated, abandoned, where
21 there's widespread poverty and substantial
22 unemployment. Where the buildings are "obsolete,
23 abandoned, inefficient, delapidated and without
24 adequate mass transportation facilities."

25 The ESD is told to develop rental housing

2 that is affordable to persons of low income and to
3 seek out urban places where there is unavailability
4 of private capital.

5 None of that describes the Penn neighborhood,
6 which is awash in private capital and sits on top of
7 a massive transit network in the middle of the
8 densest county in the entire country.

9 The CEO of Vornado crowed about this in his
10 annual shareholder letter. And I quote, Day and
11 night, the Penn district is teeming with activity.
12 Our assets sit literally on top of Penn Station, the
13 region's major transportation, adjacent to Macy's and
14 Madison Square Garden.

15 Roth repeats that the area is "teeming with
16 traffic, and our retail does really well there, that
17 has the highest growth opportunity in our portfolio."
18 He even tells the world that the Hotel Pennsylvania
19 was highly profitable before Vornado warehoused it.

20 It is circular reasoning to claim that if an
21 area does not show constant demolition and rebuilding
22 with class A office space, that it is, therefore,
23 stagnant, in the words of the neighborhood conditions
24 study. Since when is a class A office monoculture
25 the apex outcome for cities?

2 As urbanists have long explained, successful
3 cities require great diversity of office space, kinds
4 of buildings, industries, residents and incomes.
5 Urban success is destroyed when monocultures of any
6 kind become dominant. Yet the ESD's logic is that if
7 market forces have not already demolished a
8 neighborhood and replaced it with taller class A
9 buildings, then the ESD should use state power to
10 force that result river to river.

11 By what legitimate theory of economic growth
12 is that the case? If we apply that reasoning to the
13 rest of the city, all of Manhattan, we would demolish
14 and rebuild every ten years.

15 The ESD also rhetorically equates the age of
16 buildings with the words "obsolete" or "outmoded."
17 This utter nonsense. The White House is over 200
18 years old. Should it be demolished?

19 The ESD bases this project on the discredited
20 hyper-gentrification strategy that of a luxury city
21 model. It fails to provide a credible economic
22 development strategy for working-class people,
23 entrepreneurs, startups, small businesses, all of whom
24 who currently thrive in the area. Instead, the ESD
25 seeks to keep them out.

2 Since when is the ESD directed by law to
3 serve large corporations and the high --

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

5 MS. ELLSWORTH: -- wage gentry class instead
6 of everyone else? Thank you.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 We'll now move to our next list of ten
10 speakers. At the beginning of that list we will
11 reinsert Helen Rosenberg who was a registered -- a
12 registered speaker a little earlier who was having
13 technical difficulties. So we will begin with Helen
14 Roseberg, and then we'll move on to this registered
15 list:

16 Bridget Fisher;
17 Rytva Soni;
18 Leathea Vanadore;
19 Susan Ackoff Ortega;
20 Troy Torrison;
21 Susan Nial;
22 Cheryl Fish;
23 Jamal Johnson;
24 Michael Henry;
25 and Cezar Nicolescu.

2 So, first, we'll go back a bit on our list
3 for Helen Rosenberg.

4 Helen Rosenberg, you may unmute. Let us know
5 when you're ready to begin.

6 MS. ROSENBERG: Thank you. One moment. My
7 name is Helen Rosenberg. I live in Penn South in
8 Chelsea.

9 I just want to say I'm not speaking because
10 I'm NIMBY. I'm not saying not in my backyard. I
11 don't favor the status quo. I favor a plan where we
12 can increase capacity within the existing envelope of
13 Penn Station by converting to a through-running
14 operating model of transit, which I'll talk about in
15 a minute.

16 I favor moving Madison Square Garden. It's
17 happened before and building a great above ground
18 station and I believe that development can happen on
19 appropriate lots, combining the best of old and new.

20 We don't believe in a dated transportation
21 model, leaving MSG on top of Penn Station or
22 bulldozing the neighborhood, displacing residents,
23 small businesses and destroying historic structures.
24 And if you think that gentrification is not going to
25 increase to a magnitude we have not seen in this

2 neighborhood if you put thousands of the business
3 officer workers who make a lot of money and who would
4 love to live in this neighborhood, then you do not
5 know what landlords can do to tenants.

6 I lived in -- I used to live in Hell's
7 Kitchen. Landlords would go and take doors off of
8 people's apartments. And there were -- somebody was
9 actually shot by someone that was hired by a
10 landlord. So that will be on your head if this
11 project continues.

12 Through-running trains -- I want to get back
13 to the transit. Through-running trains would pass
14 through Penn Station while originating and
15 terminating in rail hubs on either side of the Hudson
16 and East Rivers. This would allow for unification of
17 the region's rail system.

18 And studies show that by converting to
19 through-running, Penn Station, as now configured,
20 would be able to service more trains with future
21 tracks. This would permit the widening of platforms
22 and staircases, a much-needed public safety measure
23 and a considerable amenity for travelers. It would
24 cost less than adding new tracks for 31st Street to
25 30th Street and provide superior commuter service.

2 We do not need more tracks. We don't need to
3 demolish a whole city block to lay them. The costs
4 and benefits of through-running are so compelling.
5 Please explain why the State of New York is ignoring
6 this option.

7 Thank you for giving me an opportunity to
8 speak.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 At this time, I will read a list of the
12 registered speakers who are not currently present.
13 If you hear your name on this list, please -- please
14 email help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know the
15 name or phone number under which you're registered:

16 Bridget Fisher.

17 Rytva Soni;

18 Susan Ackoff Ortega;

19 Troy Torrison;

20 Cheryln Fish;

21 Jamal Johnson;

22 and Cezar Nicolescu.

23 If are you one of the names that I just read,
24 please email help@publicworkspartners.com, and we'll
25 make sure to enable you to speak.

2 I'll move next to the next registered speaker
3 who is present, Leathe Vanadore.

4 MS. VANADORE: Yes.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: I hear you.

6 MS. VANADORE: My name is Leathe Vanadore.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Leathe, thank you.

8 MS. VANADORE: Mispronounce it, it's okay.

9 It's name nobody heard until (technical
10 difficulties), except me.

11 Anyway, I just want to say that I'm basically
12 in agreement with most of the people who spoke
13 against this project. I just don't -- we have so
14 many big buildings that are totally unoccupied, but I
15 don't know what -- you know, I guess they're getting
16 big tax deductions. They've got something going on.

17 But it's -- I truly don't think we need
18 another -- we just don't need any more building in
19 this neighborhood. I live in Penn South, and I love
20 it here. Several of us have spoken, and we are -- I
21 think we all feel very fortunate to live here. But
22 we really don't need any more tall glass and metal
23 buildings. We just don't need any more of those and
24 here in our area.

25 So I agree with everyone who spoke against

2 this project. We just don't need it.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Our next speaker will be Susan Nial.

6 Susan Nial, you may -- yup, we -- I can see
7 your video if you'll -- yep, and now you're unmuted.
8 You can start when you're ready.

9 MS. NIAL: Okay. My name is Susan Nial. I'm
10 an attorney. I've been working in the area of land
11 use and perspective vacation for a good decade on a
12 very pro bono basis. And I'm testifying against this
13 project.

14 If this were a short story, the title would
15 be "Opportunists and Scoundrels." When you consider
16 the suggestion that eminent domain could be used to
17 destroy good, solid buildings and kick out people who
18 have been living in this neighborhood for some of
19 them for decades and kill small business,
20 opportunists and scoundrels is actually the least you
21 could call some of these people.

22 I want the people who are pushing this
23 project to realize that the claim that they are doing
24 this to improve Penn Station is not true. The
25 development corporation itself has changed its stand

2 on, it has said, in fact, that it will not help to
3 pay for the upkeep or the renovation of Penn Station.

4 When we're talking about the destruction of
5 the neighborhood, we are talking about what happened
6 in Harlem. We are talking about what happened in San
7 Juan, the San Juan district that was destroyed to put
8 up Lincoln Center. We are talking about quote,
9 removal of human beings. We are not talking about
10 improving the life of human beings. We are talking
11 about providing development proper -- profit
12 opportunities for developers who could care less
13 about the city.

14 I would ask, I would really ask, but I know
15 that I'm talking basically to deep dark space for the
16 economic development corporation to consider what its
17 true purpose is, what the true purpose of eminent
18 domain is, what the true purpose of working in the
19 best interest of the public is.

20 It doesn't seem that they know that. They do
21 know what it's all about, working in the best
22 interest of developers. And that's what's happening
23 here. That's what's happening here. Affordable
24 housing is a smoke screen. The economic development
25 is a smoke screen. Improved transportation is a

2 smoke screen.

3 In my career as a litigation attorney, I
4 looked and saw many smoke screens. Whether it was
5 regarding tobacco or asbestos or any other corporate
6 entity that wished to make profit out of human
7 misery.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

9 MS. NIAL: This project is not about
10 transportation. It is about opportunists and
11 scoundrels.

12

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 At this time we have Rytva Soni who was on
16 this list who is ready to speak.

17 Rytva Soni, you may unmute and start your
18 testimony when ready.

19 MS. SONI: Thank you so much, I'm sorry I was
20 late.

21 So I have been a resident for Chelsea for 23
22 years, I live in Penn South and it seems to me that
23 this is simply another, as the previous speaker said,
24 another opportunity for big business to -- for big
25 developers to raze neighborhoods, to displace

2 families, to displace existing neighborhoods and
3 create another boondoggle like Hudson Yards which is
4 standing there, unoccupied.

5 They say there's affordable housing with, you
6 know, a poor person's entry, you know. We don't need
7 that here. What we need is to keep the feeling of
8 Chelsea of New York as it is, we don't need more
9 boondoggles for wealthy people, for
10 multimillionaires. Affordable housing by their terms
11 means someone who was making more money than -- than
12 the workers in New York make, that's not affordable
13 housing.

14 I personally -- I'm a teacher, I've been
15 teaching for 15 years, and I can afford to live in
16 New York City because I live in Penn South, that's
17 the only reason I can afford it. I could not afford
18 one of these, I couldn't afford the rent, I couldn't
19 afford to buy into it. I'm a hard-working person, I
20 work two jobs and I could never live there.

21 We don't need to have more unoccupied, high
22 cost apartments, we don't need to have the massive
23 development. We don't need enrich the developers.
24 We need to improve services for the people who were
25 there, we need to ensure their lives are good. We do

2 not need to raze neighborhoods where people have
3 lived for generations, where people have worked for
4 generations in order to enrich developers more.

5 That's basically all I have to say.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be Michael Henry Adams.

9 Michael Henry Adams, you may unmute and let
10 us know when you're ready to begin.

11 MR. ADAMS: Dammit.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can hear you.

13 MR. ADAMS: Yes, yes. But I'm -- the
14 picture.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Let's see -- you
16 came -- yep, your video is on. We can see you. And
17 we can hear you as well.

18 MR. ADAMS: Thank you so much. Good evening,
19 everyone. I'm Michael Henry Adams. I'm an
20 architectural historian, I live in Harlem.

21 And you know, George Santayana said that
22 unless we learn from history, we're doomed to repeat
23 it. And in 1961 Penn Station, one of the great
24 monuments of a nation was destroyed and now we seem
25 bent on destroying all of the historic buildings

2 around it and to do what? To replace it with
3 something like Madison Square Garden, a commercial
4 entity which may be beneficial to the developers, but
5 it's not developed -- not beneficial in the longterm
6 to the people of the City of New York. This is a
7 neighborhood, a vital neighborhood that represents
8 the diversity and the historic character that is New
9 York.

10 When tourists come here, they want to see
11 some place that they recognize as New York. When
12 movies or TV productions decide to make films and TV
13 series here, they want neighborhoods that express New
14 York. Why would we exchange New York for Dubai?
15 Such a sterile and totally immoral place in terms of
16 its architecture and its economy.

17 We have a tremendous need for affordable
18 housing and social services. And this has been
19 demonstrated by the spike in crime including the
20 person who was just pushed off of a subway platform.
21 We have an opportunity with President Biden's
22 infrastructure funding to be able to address that
23 real and pressing need here in New York.

24 We are told that fashionable people tell us
25 that somehow preservation is elitist. But in fact,

2 most historic preservation, one of the things that it
3 does is it preserves rent regulated apartments. And
4 in this case, you're going to get rid of some 2,500
5 rent regulated apartments and replace them with 500
6 affordable units which have an affordability which is
7 magnitudes below what people already enjoy. And this
8 is really appalling, it's just appalling. And we
9 must, we must not destroy landmarks like St. John's
10 Church and the Hotel Pennsylvania.

11 Imagine you have the branding of a place
12 where even today all this time later one can remember
13 the telephone number, Pennsylvania 6 5000. Imagine
14 that.

15 We have to preserve this neighborhood. It is
16 part of what makes New York a unique and wonderful
17 place to live in. Thank you very much.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 At this time, the time is 8:52 p.m. We have
21 completed our first 100 registered speakers who have
22 been present and we are going to take another
23 ten-minute recess, so that our hardworking ASL
24 interpreters and stenographer, as well as myself can
25 have a short break.

2 We will take our short break now and come
3 back in ten minutes just before we start that time
4 clock. I just want to make sure everyone is aware
5 that we have -- after the break we have I believe
6 still have more than 150 registered speakers.

7 We will continue the hearing until such time
8 if -- as long as we can to enable everyone to have
9 the opportunity to speak. But I also want to remind
10 everyone that you can submit written testimony which
11 will be registered and considered in the same manner
12 as verbal testimony given here this evening.

13 Written testimony can be submitted through
14 February 22nd at 5:00 p.m. to -- via email or U.S.
15 mail at PennStationarea@ESD.NY.GOV or via U.S. mail
16 to 633 Third Avenue New York, New York 10017. And
17 those addresses are shown on your screen
18 periodically.

19 So it is now -- the time is now 8:54 p.m., we
20 will recommence with the next set of registered
21 speakers at 9:04 p.m.

22 Thank you and see you at 9:04.

23 (Whereupon, a short break was taken.)

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Welcome back to the
25 Penn Station Area -- excuse me, welcome back to the

2 Penn Station Redevelopment Area Public Hearing for
3 the General Project Plan draft EIS and proposed
4 revisions to the GPP.

5 We will now restart our public hearing.

6 Excuse me, and we'll soon restart our slide show I
7 think. But for now, we will -- I will read out the
8 list of our next set of ten speakers. Our next ten
9 speakers will be:

10 Dave Fattizzo;

11 Todd Fine;

12 Olive Freud;

13 Louis Cholden-Brown;

14 Miriam Fisher;

15 Jarell Gibbs;

16 Raymond Shaffer;

17 Susan Immergut;

18 Susan Nash;

19 And Rachel Blasen.

20 Out of that list we have a few registered
21 speakers who are not present on the Zoom. I'm going
22 to read that list and if you are present under a
23 different name or phone number, please email
24 help@publicworkspartners.com.

25 Registered speakers who are not currently

2 present include:

3 Todd Fine;

4 Olive Freud;

5 Louis Cholden-Brown;

6 Jarrell Gibbs;

7 And Raymond Shaffer.

8 So with that we will begin with Dave
9 Fattizzo.

10 Dave Fattizzo, you may unmute and let us know
11 when you're ready to begin. We can see you and
12 you're unmuted so you can begin.

13 MR. FATTIZZO: Oh, boy. Here we go. Good
14 evening everyone. My name is Dave Fattizo and I
15 represent the Long Island Association. We are the
16 region's leading not-for-profit, nonpartisan business
17 organization since 1926.

18 As Long Islander's Chamber of Commerce, the
19 LIA ensures the region's economic vitality and
20 provides leadership to guarantee a bright future for
21 Long Island. The Long Island Railroad is critical to
22 the Long Island economy and that of the entire
23 metropolitan region.

24 The Long Island Railroad is the busiest
25 commuter railroad in New York America, carrying an

2 average of 300,000 customers each workday on 735
3 daily trains. Right now it is our only connection to
4 New York City via rail, which we will be expanded
5 when the Planned East Side Access opens that year.

6 The Long Island Association strongly supports
7 the Penn Station redevelopment project. Penn Station
8 is in dire need revita -- of a renovation. It is in
9 despair and the current state is a burden for daily
10 commuters coming from Long Island and other places in
11 the metro area and a travesty for people being
12 welcomed to New York for the first time.

13 The proposed comprehensive redevelopment plan
14 will serve as a source of revenue for the
15 construction and expansion of Penn Station. Long
16 Island's economy remains linked to New York City's
17 economy and those who work in New York City and live
18 on Long Island generate billions in income and impact
19 for our region.

20 Additionally, the New York City economy is
21 strengthened by being able to attract our well
22 educated and trained work force. The Penn Station
23 Redevelopment Project will encourage more connections
24 between Long Island and New York City, with workers
25 commuting to the city and reverse commuters to Long

2 Island. It will make commuting more accessible and
3 encourage people to take the train instead of using
4 their car, alleviating traffic.

5 The proposed mixed use transit-oriented
6 development will provide a much-needed facelift to
7 the surrounding area, which will greatly improve the
8 public spaces. This project will also create jobs to
9 support New York State's continued growth and foster
10 more economic connections between Long Island and New
11 York City.

12 The Penn Station Redevelopment Project will
13 result in a modern state of the art transit hub in
14 the heart of New York City, and the Long Island
15 Association looks forward to seeing this critically
16 needed project come to fruition.

17 Thank you so much and everybody have a good
18 night.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me. Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 Our next speaker will be Miriam Fisher.

22 Miriam Fisher, you may unmute and start when
23 you're ready.

24 MS. FISHER: Okay. Can you hear me?

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

2 MS. FISHER: I'm Miriam Fisher. I'm a
3 transportation and disability advocate and former
4 retired learning specialist and I live in Chelsea.

5 I want to first highlight some of the issues
6 that have either been discussed peripherally or not
7 given full attention, including accessibility and
8 disability.

9 As a colleague of mine who spoke earlier,
10 there's no closed caption on the screen today which
11 makes it hard for us who have may have hearing
12 difficulties follow along with the dialogue clearly.

13 I'm going to mention the disability advocates
14 are concerned about insufficient elevators. So
15 many -- the connection between the mezzanine platform
16 and the maze of the station, the clear signage for
17 finding extensible paths easily. For people with
18 disabilities to -- especially there's time deadlines
19 to catch a train.

20 There's a wide range of disabilities, not
21 just ambulatory, people that just have transportation
22 needs, blind, cognitive, who need assistance and
23 different kinds of support.

24 I recommend input from different disability
25 groups to address all these issues and to mention

2 that there's been media coverage of insufficient
3 seating in the waiting areas and photos of people in
4 the Times when there was transportation -- lying on
5 the floor because they didn't have seating. Which
6 also effects all of us, people with disabilities,
7 people who just need to sit while they're waiting.

8 Another issue with Penn is Madison Square
9 Garden. The plan for a world-class station by moving
10 Madison Square Garden with its unknown cause,
11 dislocation, disruption currently to multiple subway
12 and trains.

13 I disagree with the Empire State Development
14 Corporation, estimated the cost at \$8.6 billion
15 including building, finding a new location,
16 reconfiguring Penn Station and the site. Cost
17 overruns (indecipherable) transportation policy
18 reported that bigger traffic snarls will ensue, a
19 longer distance from the subway, will encourage
20 sports fans to drive rather than to take the subway.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Excuse me. Ten
22 seconds.

23 MS. FISHER: According to -- according to
24 (indecipherable) Albany, the -- the station just
25 spent a billion dollars on renovation.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
3 for your testimony.

4 Our next speaker will be Susan Immergut.

5 Susan Immergut, please unmute your video and
6 let us know when you're ready to begin.

7 MS. IMMERGUT: Unmute myself and start video.
8 Hi.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. We can hear you
10 and see you.

11 MS. IMMERGUT: I just wanted to say that
12 Raymond Shaffer is with me. He's on the list.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great.

14 MS. IMMERGUT: So I will speak first and then
15 Raymond will speak. Okay.

16 This project is developer driven instead of
17 the public. The public is being called now after the
18 plans have already been made. The general public and
19 the groups opposing this plan should have listened to
20 the sensible solutions, the groups and the public
21 opposing this plan who are speaking this evening.
22 It's not too late. Let stop Vornado's and Governor
23 Hochul's plans.

24 Invite the public and these groups to sit
25 down with the Governor and the developer to improve

2 the current plan to make our city great, not to
3 diminish it with this plan. And in order for this
4 Penn Station to get the station that we really
5 deserve, we need to get rid of Madison Square Garden
6 from the site. I think that's really important and
7 many people have mentioned it this evening.

8 New York City does not need another
9 conglomeration of ten ugly super-tall buildings so
10 close to Hudson Yards and surrounding areas that are
11 already full of glass monoliths. We have been given
12 enough sterile glass monstrosities, intruding in our
13 neighborhoods to last a lifetime. They are an
14 eyesore, eat up the sky and light and should be a
15 warning to those who want our city to remain unique
16 instead of a generic place.

17 Please do not tear down our history by
18 demolishing several blocks which contain people and
19 businesses.

20 And Raymond Shaffer is going to speak now.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 MR. SHAFFER: Hello. My name is Raymond
24 Shaffer. I live at Penn South.

25 The architectural historian, Victor Skully

2 compared the old Penn Station to the new one, "once
3 we entered the city like gods. Now one scuttles in
4 like a rat." And that probably is very, very true.

5 We ask ourselves how could the tragedy of the
6 old Penn Station happen? How can we allow so
7 beautiful an edifice as the old Penn Station to be
8 destroyed?

9 Here we are again, just as in 1963, we have
10 an opportunity to replace the current Penn Station
11 with a new one that could be equivalent to the old
12 beautiful Penn Station, a monument for the ages.
13 Let's take this opportunity to build a station that
14 is worthy of the great city instead of the current
15 plan that gives us a grand mistake.

16 Thank you so much for your time.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 At this time we will move to the next speaker
20 who will be Susan Nash.

21 Susan Nash.

22 MS. NASH: Hi.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yep. You are unmuted
24 and visible so start when you're ready.

25 MS. NASH: Am I visible? Okay. So I'm also

2 a resident of Penn South which is just south of the
3 area that this plan is seeking to destroy. I'm a
4 member of LEAPS which is part of the Empire State
5 Coalition which is finding other solutions.

6 Many, many other solutions have been brought
7 forth and proposed that don't include destroying the
8 neighborhood. This is the wrong solution to improve
9 Penn Station.

10 The plan will be destructive to an active
11 working class community currently inhabited by many
12 real people and small businesses and factories.
13 People live in affordable, often rent-stabilized
14 apartments in beautiful classical old buildings.
15 These buildings should be landmarked. This
16 neighborhood supports people who work in the area.

17 This new plan creates highrise office
18 buildings which are not needed and will only benefit
19 Vornado Realty and other big business realty.
20 Expensive apartments will create a neighborhood where
21 few people actually live. This is adjacent to the
22 middle class active neighborhood where I live and
23 would be detrimental to my neighborhood as well.

24 Please seek other solutions. This should not
25 be the end. This is further destruction of what

2 happened to Penn Station in the first place. Thank
3 you.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Our next speaker will be -- excuse me one
7 moment; Rachel Blasen or Blaysen.

8 There, Rachel Blasen --

9 MS. BLASEN: Hi. Yes.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see you. Start
11 when you're ready.

12 MS. BLASEN: My name is Ray Blasen. I was
13 born and raised in Chelsea in Penn South and I would
14 like to add my voice to those opposing this plan.

15 This plan is terrible. It's only marginally
16 less destructive than the original plan. Penn
17 Station does not need office towers around it to be
18 improved in the first place. Local taxpayers will
19 end up bailing out the tax statement that Vornado
20 gets. It doesn't even apparently directly contribute
21 to the Penn Station project itself.

22 Even the method of this community hearing is
23 less than accessible, and as the others have pointed
24 out is somewhat rushed.

25 The endorsement of this plan comes at the

2 expense of Chelsea residents, it's sacrificing our
3 residents and it's sacrificing our community
4 resources. We do not need more office space in a
5 contract to the largest commercial landlord in New
6 York, when vast swaths of white collar businesses
7 have gone full or partial or rotating remote for
8 good.

9 People who come into the office once a month
10 from 9 to 5 are not going to be supporting our local
11 economy. We don't need to phase the ecological
12 impact nor the psychological impact this type of
13 construction and upwards development generates.

14 To quote the Draft Environment Impact
15 Statement directly as described in chapter 22 in
16 mitigation, "the proposed project will result in
17 significant adverse impacts with respect to open
18 space, shadows, historic and cultural resources,
19 visual resources, transportation, noise and
20 construction."

21 Chelsea residents don't deserve to be
22 subjected to this, have our tax dollars used to drive
23 us out of our neighborhood. (Indecipherable) is
24 what's happening here. There's no relationship
25 between density and urban growth. The city showed in

2 areas where density is necessary low and dense
3 provides better community benefit over buildings
4 straight up and the ecological and psychological
5 effects that skyscrapers have.

6 We should be fighting for affordable mixed
7 use buildings that service the community with diverse
8 class residency, not selling out to developers and
9 uprooting current residents. This plan instead
10 caters to upper crust tech employees in the area,
11 instead of working at middle class needs.

12 If it were not for middle class housing like
13 Penn South, my family would have been driven out of
14 New York and unable to patronize local businesses
15 years ago.

16 The original statement on the Pennsylvania
17 Station Civic and Land Use Project impact --
18 environmental impact study states that the proposed
19 project would not introduce new residential space and
20 the project area would (indecipherable) net reduction
21 of residential units. Now out of 1,800 residential
22 units proposed, only 540 are expected to be
23 affordable. I have no faith in a plan that fails to
24 account for housing in the first place.

25 Prior speakers have also been reiterating

2 accessibility of this project. The economic
3 accessibility is also a form of accessibility.
4 Affordable housing has been under attack for decades
5 in our neighborhood and is coming to a head in the
6 form of the destruction of Fulton Houses after years
7 of neglect and now this.

8 What we need is more affordable housing and I
9 don't mean under a useless metric like AMI. I mean
10 truly affordable housing and the city committing to a
11 housing first policy. As it stands, this plan does
12 not meet neighborhood needs and should not be
13 approved. Thank you.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Our next speaker I believe -- a speaker or
17 two -- yes. So our next speaker will be Todd Fine.

18 Todd Fine, you may -- yep. There you are.

19 MR. FINE: Greetings. Okay.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can hear you.

21 MR. FINE: You can see me. Okay.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

23 MR. FINE: So this plan is quite similar to
24 Hudson Yards. It's next to Hudson Yards, it's kind
25 of the same model of Hudson Yards. Which is that we

2 have the government condemn property or seize
3 property to give to a single developer to establish a
4 monopoly.

5 And we're seeing this all over the city, it's
6 almost like every real estate company needs these
7 campuses. Vornado is already posting signs saying
8 this is a campus. You see the same thing at the
9 South Street Seaport, we see the same thing that ESD
10 is trying to do at the World Trade Center, World
11 Trade Center 5. They're trying to allow Silverstein
12 and Brookfield to build a mega-campus of 10 and 11
13 buildings that would be mixed use, both residential
14 and commercial.

15 And what's amazing is that these -- that
16 Hudson Yards is a failed model that -- and the
17 Environmental Impact Statement didn't really review
18 Hudson Yards.

19 I mean, if we're going to talk about the
20 fiscal impact and the economic impact, we need to
21 specifically interrogate Hudson Yards, and Hudson
22 Yards is asking for a bailout.

23 And we're now -- this premise -- the whole
24 premise of this is to fund Penn Station and to create
25 these junk bonds to do so. But yet the Environmental

2 Impact Statement doesn't really review the
3 possibilities of what the fiscal impact would be
4 if -- if the situation has changed. If the situation
5 for the demand for office towers changes, if -- if
6 Vornado simply chooses not to develop.

7 And it's so irresponsible for us to make
8 policy, to build infrastructure through promises
9 through real estate who we know, and as Hudson Yards
10 proves, will just ask for bailouts and try to get
11 subsidies endlessly, they will never stop.

12 We saw this at ESD's other projects, we saw
13 this at the World Trade Center, we see this in terms
14 of the model of Hudson Yards, we see this at the
15 Seaport, the way they're asking. So these campuses
16 are a business model to suck resources from the
17 taxpayer to enable boondoggle projects where they
18 leach as much as they can.

19 And the Environmental Impact Statements don't
20 do a proper historical review. The Environmental
21 Impact Statement is wrong and it needs to be redone
22 with a historical understanding of how mega real
23 estate manipulates and buys our government to enable
24 boondoggle projects that are essentially giveaways of
25 public resources, public space.

2 And in this case, you know, destroying
3 historic buildings is just an insult upon injury.
4 It's really a shame and we're seeing it all over the
5 city. Thank you.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be Cezar Nicolescu.

9 MR. NICOLESCU: Hello. Can you hear me?

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear and
11 see you.

12 MR. NICOLESCU: Excellent. So I'm probably
13 just going to say what we've been hearing this whole
14 time, but I just also want to add how important it is
15 to consider value of why people come to New York City
16 in the first place.

17 And when I'm looking at development of Hudson
18 Yards and I'm looking at the renderings for the
19 Empire Station Complex, I feel like it's coming from
20 a different planet. Specifically a planet that's
21 called Dubai or something that has nothing to do with
22 New York's texture and vitality.

23 And I think it's really important that we
24 just simply consider that New York attracts the world
25 because it is New York. And projects like these

2 dilute the value, they take away the texture, the
3 life, the things that create sort of a cinematic
4 experience to people over here and that's -- that
5 connects to everything, it's not just romance. But
6 it's -- it's the small businesses, it's the
7 livelihoods, it's the spontaneity.

8 You're not going to have that when your whole
9 street facade is nothing but a few corporate lobbies
10 and I don't think I have to reiterate what other
11 people have been saying, that this whole project is
12 pure -- I'll just state corruption on a massive
13 scale.

14 It's essentially a mechanization that went
15 through the previous governor so that he could pay
16 back his friends in the real estate industry and it's
17 simply obvious that the public gets very little value
18 from this.

19 But the people with the reins at Vornado will
20 make massive profits from this, with nothing to show
21 but the destruction of valuable urban historic fabric
22 and it's not going to be replaceable.

23 You know, people can see that this is sort of
24 a nostalgist's perspective and maybe there's a
25 certain element of that. But comparatively this is

2 the biggest urban renewal project since Robert Moses,
3 and I can't believe we're even talking about things
4 like defining slums in this day and age, like we
5 should have been over this 60 years ago.

6 So you know, I can just keep on -- keep on
7 repeating what other people have said. I don't know
8 what to do anymore as a concerned resident of this
9 city. It almost seems as if it's already been
10 decided and this whole process is just another rubber
11 stamp.

12 So I raise my hands up in futility but I hope
13 that our voices can be heard and I hope that there
14 can be -- there can be a real public discourse about
15 this and it doesn't happen. I do not approve of this
16 project at all.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 At this time we're going to move into our
20 next list of ten registered speakers. We have had
21 some folks raising their hands recently and I'd like
22 remind everyone that if you are registered to speak
23 but you're not sure if we have your name, you may
24 email the email address, help@publicworkspartners.com
25 to ask if you're on the list and what position you

2 are in on the list.

3 We are no longer able to accept new speaking
4 requests. The public hearing stipulated that the
5 time to sign up to speak, to register to speak ended
6 at 7:30 p.m.

7 If you are -- however, if you were on the
8 registered speaker list as of 7:30 p.m., we
9 absolutely have your name and your number -- excuse
10 me. And you will be called to provide testimony in
11 the order in which you registered to speak. Thank
12 you.

13 I think one other quick reminder is that we
14 are prioritizing speakers who are speaking for the
15 first time this evening and we are -- we're not
16 prioritizing folks who spoke first on the first
17 hearing on December 8th because your testimony has
18 already been recorded and will be considered if you
19 testified at the first hearing.

20 So with that, we'll go to our next list of
21 ten registered speakers. That is speakers number 111
22 through 120. We do have about 260 registered
23 speakers in total, and so we anticipate that -- it
24 will take us quite a bit of time to get through
25 the -- our list of speakers.

2 If you would like to submit your testimony in
3 writing via email or U.S. mail, the addresses will be
4 shown on your screen periodically during this
5 hearing. You can also email the
6 help@publicworkspartners.com email address if you
7 need direction on how to submit written testimony or
8 if you would like technical support.

9 All right. Our next ten registered speakers
10 are:

11 Lizette Colon;
12 Jean Standish;
13 Carmen Hendershott;
14 Rogan Heather;
15 Damina Townes;
16 Kyle Supley or Soupley;
17 Liz Taub;
18 And Ronald Lauria;
19 And Dave Kapell.

20 Out of that list, we have a few speakers who
21 are not present in the hearing at the moment:

22 Lizette Colon;
23 Justine Pippitt;
24 Rogan Heather;
25 Liz Taub;

2 Ronald Lauria. That's it.

3 If you are one of those five names that I've
4 just called and you are present, please
5 help@publicworkspartners.com so that we can make sure
6 to include you and to give you the opportunity to
7 speak.

8 Our first registered speaker in this group
9 who is present is Jean Standish.

10 Jean Standish, you may unmute your audio and
11 let us know when you've ready to begin.

12 MS. STANDISH: Can you hear me?

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can hear you.
14 And you can begin when you're ready.

15 MS. STANDISH: My name is Jean Standish.

16 As a voter and taxpayer of New York State, I
17 urge you to take positive action to stop the
18 Governor's plan to declare the area around Penn
19 Station blighted and impose ten new skyscrapers
20 around New York City's Penn Station neighborhood.

21 I don't want to make a compromise deal with
22 either Vornado, Governor Hochul or the Empire State
23 Development Corporation. I want the project stopped
24 cold. Here's why:

25 None of the activities of the project

2 benefits the public good. The project really only
3 enriches Vornado, who has taken to calling the area
4 the Vornado campus.

5 As documented in the Environmental Impact
6 Statement, the project will evict hundreds of
7 residents now in affordable housing, displace
8 hundreds of small businesses in the area and
9 thousands of small business employees.

10 Demolish many beautiful historic buildings in
11 the area such as the Church of Saint John the
12 Baptist, the Gimbel's Building with its sky bridge,
13 the old Penn Station service building by McKim, Mead
14 & White and the Hotels Pennsylvania and Stewart.

15 The financing of the project is entirely
16 speculative and unsubstantiated, leading to undue
17 burdens on New York taxpayers as well as the granting
18 of excessive subsidies to Vornado. The result will
19 be a new kind of unwanted blight like that of the
20 Hudson Yards.

21 The project neglects to consider the cheaper
22 and better alternative, making Penn Station the
23 center of a regional unified train network with a new
24 Penn Station above ground.

25 Please stop this disastrous project. Thank

2 you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Our next speaker will be Carmen Hendershott.

6 MS. HENDERSHOTT: Can you hear me?

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

8 MS. HENDERSHOTT: Can you hear me? That's
9 great. I don't think my video is working. I can
10 click on it and see. Probably not. This is the
11 statement:

12 I wanted to say that the original Penn
13 Station was named after its builder and original
14 tenant which was Pennsylvania Railroad. That's why
15 is isn't named New York Station or some such. And
16 the demolition of the original Penn Station is
17 mourned by lots of New Yorkers and other people up to
18 now and we're about make the same mistake if that
19 plan goes through that is under consideration now.

20 In the form of demolition of the neighborhood
21 around Penn Station so that developers Steve Roth,
22 Vornado Realty Trust can build ten skyscrapers of
23 commercial office space to finance the renovation of
24 the current Penn Station and without apparently
25 considering other methods of renovation. And the

2 description -- - the demolition will get rid of
3 historically significant buildings and will destroy
4 workable affordable housing in the area.

5 If any affordable housing is constructed like
6 these 540 or 640 units or so, that will be far less
7 than the number of affordable housing units that are
8 destroyed and they won't rent at the same reasonable
9 rates that the units that people have now are renting
10 for. And if they have a 20 percent affordable unit,
11 it may go away after 30 years or so, they often do.

12 So in the long run, the renovation will
13 provide no affordable housing and will eliminate the
14 affordable housing that exists now and the office
15 space will probably have a vacancy rate because of
16 the demand of workers to have remote work at their
17 homes wherever they live.

18 And this also is probably going to depress
19 the demand for commuting into New York City from Long
20 Island and from communities on Metro-North because
21 more people will be working from home and this is not
22 going to go away when COVID subsides. It's going to
23 stay because people want to work for home. And
24 employers will be tempted to allow it because that
25 will save them a lot of costs in renting or buying

2 properties for office space and that hits on those
3 ten buildings that are being proposed, which are a
4 totally bad idea.

5 So the summary of -- and then if the extreme
6 rents are changed on small businesses to try and make
7 up the money, small mom and pops will be driven out
8 of business and they are the ones that give the
9 distinct New York flavor to the neighborhood.

10 So if chain and franchise businesses come in
11 instead, people won't get anything different in New
12 York than they get if they just stayed in their
13 hometown, and there will be no particular reason for
14 tourists to frequent the midtown area, except if they
15 have to take a train.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

17 MS. HENDERSHOTT: I can't see that it will do
18 anything but ruin our neighborhood and it won't make
19 money anyhow. I'm against it.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Our next speaker will be Damina Townes.

23 MS. TOWNES: Hi. Can you hear me and see me?

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can -- we can
25 definitely see you. And there, now we can see you.

2 You can start when you're ready.

3 MS. TOWNES: Thank you, my name is Damina.
4 I've been living New York all my life in Manhattan,
5 Lower Manhattan for the past seven years and I do not
6 support this project.

7 McKim, Mead & White were an architectural
8 firm that designed the original Penn Station as well
9 as the New York Herald Building, the second Madison
10 Square Garden and the Knickerbocker Trust Building.
11 What all those buildings have in common is that they
12 were all prematurely knocked down. Penn Station was
13 due to create an international outrage.

14 So the destruction of this station which lead
15 to the Landmarks Preservation Committee or commission
16 being -- saving multiple buildings across New York
17 City such as Grand Central Terminal. What this --
18 the irony of the destruction of the original Penn
19 Station what we now have is that we can -- we can
20 save buildings but this wasn't done at that time.

21 An example of adaptive reuse which should be
22 used for a lot of the buildings in this area, it
23 would be extremely helpful. The irony that the
24 Farley Post Office was transformed into the Moynihan
25 Train Hall, Penn Station itself was destroyed and all

2 operations moved underground, so that when one walks
3 in, they say that they will scurry in like the rats.
4 And that the Pennsylvania Hotel directly next to the
5 station is going to be completely destroyed.

6 The use -- the adaptive reuse would be a
7 great opportunity to redevelop this area instead of
8 knocking down multiple buildings and taking people
9 out of the neighborhoods and changing the whole area.

10 Some of the buildings that are going to be
11 destroyed in this project are the coal fired power
12 plant on 31st Street which is one of the last
13 remaining buildings and the largest structure of the
14 original Penn Station that one can find.

15 In Hotel Pennsylvania that is still standing,
16 even though they're going to destroy it has over 700
17 guest rooms which could be used adaptively for
18 housing or something else rather than totally taking
19 it down for an office building that nobody would need
20 to use this point. It's a disgrace for the station
21 that we have right now, but the project to rebuild
22 Penn Station would be a great opportunity.

23 This pandemic has shown that office buildings
24 are not needed but housing is a much, much more
25 important need. With only 1,800 residential units

2 being built with 30 percent of those being somewhat
3 affordable, is not going to be enough for the city.

4 It's ironic also that moving Madison Square
5 Garden which is -- which was built in 1968, the
6 movement of that would help improve Penn Station, but
7 would just destroy all the buildings that were built
8 from 1910 and earlier in that area.

9 My suggestion of course would be to continue
10 the adaptive reuse, as was done with the Farley Post
11 Office and continue that with other buildings and
12 maintain Music Row, and not lose anything significant
13 and culturally important to that area as we have lost
14 over neighborhoods like Radio Row and the Financial
15 District or Swing Street or 46th Street which was
16 demolished for another business area; and Seneca
17 Village in Central Park.

18 So I do not support this. I want this to be
19 redeveloped into also give more meaning to the area,
20 keep it culturally significant, let people keep their
21 housing but also improve the amount of the housing
22 that's available in that area. Thank you.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: So thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Our next speaker will be Kyle Supley.

2 Kyle Supley or Soupley. Yes, wait. I just
3 saw. Yep.

4 MR. SUPLEY: Hi.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can hear you and see
6 you.

7 MR. SUPLEY: Great. Everything Damina just
8 said, first off. Thank you for the opportunity to
9 speak. I've lived in New York for over 23 years and
10 I absolutely love the city.

11 Yesterday I drove past the Sky Bridge, lit by
12 the sun with its gorgeous art deco design and
13 beautiful oxidized copper panels that stand for such
14 an important part of our early industrial and retail
15 history. It deserves to be adaptively reused or
16 preserved.

17 The concept of adaptive reuse needs to be at
18 the forefront of all our future designs for America's
19 major cities, especially New York City where we run
20 the risk of becoming a soulless anyplace.

21 Adaptive reuse and integrating original
22 structures can be accomplished without incredibly
23 higher costs. Designers need to only spend time and
24 effort to think more creatively, a challenge that
25 that they are more than equipped and with a focus on

2 sustainability these days should be happy to make on.

3 On last night's Stephen Colbert Show, the
4 actress Christine Baranski described upon her arrival
5 Penn Station when she was first accepted at Julliard
6 that it was so magical as she walked down Seventh
7 Avenue, it felt like she was walking down
8 Champs-Élysées. One would assume that she said this
9 because of the area's beautiful and classic
10 architecture that she saw at that time.

11 Do we want to deprive our future young New
12 Yorkers coming here for the first time of that
13 experience? I don't think so. One does not get the
14 same experience if we were to walk through the Penn
15 Station area and see only walls of ill-fitted glass
16 windows and panels that go straight to the sky and
17 block the sun.

18 This isn't to say that we shouldn't have new
19 buildings or development for the future, but when
20 existing gems of architecture exist already, they
21 need to be respected and integrated.

22 When I was new to New York myself and a
23 student at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Saint
24 John the Baptist was a respite for me, connecting to
25 my roots and upbringing and making the city feel a

2 little less scary. Looking up at its vaulted
3 ceilings and original architectural details and
4 lighting made time stand still, providing an oasis in
5 an otherwise frenetic city and it still is like that
6 today.

7 We do not have the quality materials and the
8 craftsmanship as we had when these structures were
9 first built so we cannot recreate these buildings,
10 once they're gone, they're gone forever and that is
11 not to be taken lightly. And I believe there has to
12 be a special place for anyone who wishes to tear down
13 a cathedral real estate.

14 So I implore the designers -- I implore the
15 designers of the project to retool and rethink its
16 scale and footprint so as to save our city's history
17 for the future and its inhabitants. Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Our next speaker will be Dave Kapell.

21 Dave Kapell. I saw you with your video on a
22 moment ago, so you may unmute and turn your video
23 back on and let us know when you're ready.

24 MR. KAPPELL: Can you hear me?

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can. And see

2 you.

3 MR. KAPELL: Okay. Great. Thank you.

4 Good evening. My name is Dave Kapell. I'm
5 executive director of the Right Track for Long
6 Island, a grassroots advocacy coalition of 5,000
7 members that formed to support the expansion of Long
8 Island Railroad capacity including East Side Access.

9 I rise this evening in support of the
10 proposal to rebuild Penn Station. Taken together,
11 Third Track and East Side Access will produce a 45
12 percent increase in Long Island Railroad Capacity and
13 a critical boost to the economy of Long Island.

14 But without addressing the deplorable
15 conditions at Penn, our riders will be separated into
16 two disparate groups: Half will emerge from their
17 commutes into the beautiful state of the art terminal
18 below the stately and historic Grand Central Station.
19 The other half consigned to the misery of the rathole
20 that is Penn Station.

21 Rebuilding Penn is critically important to
22 Long Island. If we were to be successful attracting
23 riders back following the pandemic, we need to make
24 investments in our transit hubs and services.
25 Government cannot foot the bill alone. We need

2 private sector support and this plan accomplishes
3 that.

4 Speaking personally, I grew up with the old
5 Penn Station and can still feel the same sense of awe
6 I experienced standing in its magnificent space, the
7 same awe I now feel when standing in Grand Central.
8 The existing station is an insult to the dignity and
9 greatness of New York City and the region. Please
10 give us back the Penn Station we deserve. Thank you.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 We'll now move to a new list of ten
14 registered speakers. I'll read the names and then
15 we'll move to the first speaker:

16 M. Benstock;
17 Greg McMurray;
18 Lucy Kuteen;
19 Joan Dorney;
20 Mitchell ternbach;
21 Christine Mullen;
22 James Peacj or Pietsch;
23 Daniel Shannon;
24 Signe Nielsen;
25 And James Galante from Local 3.

2 Out of that list there are two speakers who
3 are not -- not known to be present. When I say your
4 name, please email help@publicworkspartners.com to
5 let us know if you are registered under a different
6 name or phone number; Greg McMurray or Joan Dorney.

7 If you are a representative of one of those
8 people, please email the "help" email address.

9 So the first speaker will be M. Benstock.

10 MS. BENSTOCK: Okay. I'm -- can I start?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. You may begin
12 when you're ready.

13 MS. BENSTOCK: I'm -- excuse me. Marcy
14 Benstock, the director of Clean Air Campaign and the
15 Open Rivers Project, a city-wide and national group.

16 We strongly oppose the plan because it would
17 increase traffic jams from heavy construction
18 equipment sitting in the streets of the west 30s. It
19 would make unhealthy air pollution worse and increase
20 emergency response times and bicyclist and pedestrian
21 deaths.

22 It would destroy many thousands of existing
23 jobs that New York cannot afford to lose right now.
24 It would destroy housing units, start-up offices and
25 historic buildings. It would hamper the city's

2 recovery by making inequality worse and ignoring both
3 the real economy and disaster prevention.

4 We urge Governor Hochul and other officials
5 to reject this disastrous plan and also to keep
6 development from spreading west to Pier 76 and the
7 top risk hurricane zone in the rest of the Hudson
8 River. Thank you.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Our next speaker will be Lucy Koteen.

12 MS. KOTEEN: Yep. Hi. Hi. Thank you for
13 this opportunity to speak. My name is Lucy Koteen,
14 and I'm testifying tonight on behalf of the New York
15 City group of the Sierra Club, a national
16 environmental advocacy group with a city-wide
17 membership of 15,000 people.

18 The New York City group of the Sierra Club
19 strongly opposes the Vornado Realty Trust Penn
20 Station proposal. We strongly oppose the demolition
21 of highly functioning buildings and historic
22 properties. New York City claims they care about
23 sustainability and climate change, but they practice
24 the opposite.

25 Urban centers around the country are

2 concentrating on preservation and adaptive reuse.

3 There is no conversation of conservation talk going
4 on here. Other cities honor the historic buildings
5 which excite residents and tourists alike.

6 Demolition is a filthy business that creates toxic
7 dust. Tons and tons of materials go into the
8 landfill.

9 There are no dere -- these are not derelict
10 buildings. These are high functioning structures.
11 Hundreds of diesel spewing vehicles will be used to
12 first demolish and then remove the debris -- I'm
13 sorry. And then build massive towers that will blot
14 out the light and the air and cast shadows throughout
15 the area.

16 The future is now. Office culture has
17 changed forever, it's over. More office towers have
18 been asked for by nobody. The carbon footprint of
19 building is enormous. According the EPA, in 2018 the
20 United States generated 600 million tons of
21 construction and demolition debris, making it the
22 largest single component of landfill waste,
23 40 percent. 90 percent of construction debris
24 results from demolition.

25 This project destroys fantastic historic

2 structures that should have been approved by
3 Landmarks. It destroys residential buildings,
4 displacing thousands of tenants and displaces
5 hundreds of businesses. This at a time when office
6 buildings sit empty, when businesses have been
7 closed. The carbon -- I'm sorry. New York City has
8 fallen behind other cities that no longer have the
9 philosophy of "build, baby, build."

10 Sierra Club supports and agrees with the
11 Empire Station Coalition and we recommend that ESDC
12 meet with these advocates who have a different vision
13 that does not destroy a whole community and history
14 of New York. And we agree with many of those who
15 have raised important issues tonight and previously
16 that cannot be ignored. The community needs to be
17 heard first. This process is backwards.

18 And I just want to say how much I appreciate
19 hearing the many intelligent, perceptive comments of
20 many community members and thank them for their
21 brilliance and their passion.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
23 your testimony.

24 Okay. Excuse me. Our next speaker will be
25 Mitchell Sternbach.

2 Mitchell Sternbach.

3 MR. STERNBACH: Here I am.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

5 MR. STERNBACH: Can you hear me?

6 HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear you.

7 MR. STERNBACH: Good evening. My name is
8 Mitchell Sternbach and I'm representing Greater
9 Jamaica Development Corporation.

10 GJDC is driven to promote policies and
11 programs which approve the quality of life for the
12 people who live and work in Downtown Jamaica and
13 Southeast Queens. We are in favor of the planned
14 improvements to Penn Station and the surrounding
15 neighborhood, which will have a direct impact, not
16 only on the residents of Downtown Jamaica and
17 Southeast Queens, but international travelers
18 commuting from JFK International Airport, a very
19 important economic catalyst for our service
20 geography.

21 Vornado and New York State will create a
22 single-level double height train hall with -- that
23 doubles passenger circulation space on the new public
24 level from approximately 123,000 square feet to
25 approximately 250,000 square feet and it will

2 eliminate the congested, cramped, crowded and
3 aesthetically displeasing passageways in the existing
4 Penn Station. The 450-foot long summit train hall is
5 the size of Moynihan and Grand Central halls
6 combined.

7 The reduced density shaves off a million
8 point -- a million square feet of development from
9 the previous plan and increases heights for proposed
10 buildings that will also provide new design controls
11 to protect views of the Empire State Building along
12 33rd Street.

13 Public realm and social services adds
14 approximately 8 acres of public space including a
15 30,000 square foot plaza comparable to the size of
16 Rockefeller Plaza and mandates public space set aside
17 on each building site, creating a public realm task
18 force comprised of community leaders and
19 stakeholders. The affordable housing allows up to
20 1,800 residential units, of which 540 would be
21 affordable.

22 Great Jamaica Development Corporation
23 supports these transformational improvements 100
24 percent. Again, not just because it will improve
25 Manhattan but because these positive changes will be

2 felt in Jamaica and they will catalyze economic
3 development and progress in downtown Jamaica as well.
4 And of course these world class upgrades will put
5 Penn Station on par with other major transit hubs
6 around the world.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be Christie Mullen.

10 Hi, Christie. We can see you. You just need
11 to unmute.

12 MS. MULLEN: Okay. Can you hear me?

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

14 MS. MULLEN: Yes. Okay. I am a resident of
15 35 years of West 35th Street and Ninth Avenue in
16 Midtown Manhattan, two blocks north and one block
17 west of Penn Station. This is my home for 35 years.
18 This is a neighborhood, Community Districts 4 and 5
19 of over 150,000 people.

20 Contrary to what this proposal says, this is
21 not a blighted commercial area. I understand that a
22 lot of other people who don't live here, who come
23 into New York support this idea. I support this idea
24 in part, but we live here and we will be adversely
25 affected by this development as currently proposed,

2 and this development would go on until 2038. It
3 would go on for 16 years before it's finished.

4 Every single previous speaker has agreed,
5 even the ones who have disagreed that Penn Station
6 should be repaired, upgraded, renovated, made
7 fabulous for everyone. I agree with that also. I
8 would love that. I support the renovation, but what
9 I oppose is this Penn Station proposal as it is now.
10 It will destroy our neighborhood with tall
11 aboveground skyscrapers.

12 Why does the renovation of a commuter
13 transportation require ten high-rise office buildings
14 to be built? They're all tall, one of them is as
15 tall as the Empire State Building almost.

16 The new tall skyscrapers proposed with the
17 Penn Station expansion plan would leave our whole
18 neighborhood completely in the dark. I'm on the
19 north side of it and on a sunny day it will blot out
20 the sun. The sun will never rise above these
21 buildings in winter or any time of the year.

22 The Hudson Yards highrises have already
23 blocked out the sun after 2:00 p.m. from all of
24 Midtown Manhattan and now these high-rises as part of
25 this proposal will block the sun from the whole

2 morning, all of midtown, including all the way up to
3 Bryant Park will never see the sun again in the
4 wintertime.

5 An environmental assessment was done on the
6 effects of shadows cast by the new structures. In
7 the summer, the shadows will go from 20th Street to
8 37th Street in the winter, from 23rd all the way up
9 to 55th Street. My building will never see the sun
10 again.

11 Commuters from outside of Manhattan are
12 funneled into the most densely packed area of the
13 United States. It's in -- if it's going to be a
14 state of the art transportation hub. They -- they're
15 not going to come in and stay in the neighborhood and
16 go to these buildings. They will be quickly exported
17 to other parts of New York, that's why they're coming
18 here. They're not coming here for this neighborhood.

19 There's going to be a glut of offices as
20 there already is in New York City. There are so many
21 existing buildings that are empty, sitting empty in
22 this very neighborhood and they are proposing --

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

24 MS. MULLEN: -- demolishing everything around
25 that could be renovated and incorporated into a new

2 plan.

3 I believe we can do this, we can be creative,
4 fix Penn Station. But don't make another problem for
5 everyone for the neighborhood and destroy the life we
6 have here. Thank you very much.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
8 for your testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be James Pietsch.

10 James, yes. I see you.

11 MR. PIETSCH: Okay.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We can see you
13 as well.

14 MR. PIETSCH: Okay. Can you see Madison
15 Square Garden in the background?

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Actually a little bit.
17 I think I see the lights.

18 MR. PIETSCH: Well, I love Madison Square
19 Garden. I think it's a great place and I really
20 appreciate what that person said about that being in
21 the perfect location because of all the
22 transportation hubs. Every -- every subway stops
23 within a block of here, one or two blocks. And it
24 prevents a lot of parking problems.

25 But that said, I've lived on 30th Street for

2 45 years now and it's a great neighborhood. A lot of
3 musicians are here and we really don't need anymore
4 steel and glass towers here that have, you know,
5 vacancies just like Hudson Yards.

6 Somebody before said that Hudson Yards is
7 asking for a bailout. Do we want to pay for this and
8 have Vornado being -- making all this money?

9 What we really need here is affordable
10 housing, that's what we really need. It breaks my
11 heart, every day I walk down the street and I see
12 homeless people on the street. We need more
13 affordable housing for people. From Penn South
14 people have spoken and say it's a great place to
15 live, we need another one of those. We should
16 actually do that with Hudson Yards, make more
17 affordable housing.

18 And one other thing, I haven't heard anybody
19 talk about environmental issues. Has anybody talked
20 about putting solar panels on top of the buildings
21 they build here or windmills? That could maybe -- we
22 could actually make money and sell money -- sell
23 energy back to Con Edison.

24 So I really think that there's a lot of
25 thought that needs to go into this and I do not

2 support the program and I hope it gets rejected.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Our next speaker will be Daniel Shannon.
6 Daniel Shannon.

7 MR. SHANNON: Yes.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
9 you.

10 MR. SHANNON: Thank you very much. My name
11 is Dan Shannon, I'm a resident of New York City.

12 Important transportation centers and great
13 cities concentrate the vitality, activity and
14 diversity of place. The Penn District, already the
15 most active hub in the northeast is emerging beyond
16 transportation and supports to a place for work,
17 living and recreation.

18 As a principal architect working on the
19 recreation of both 1 and 2 Penn for the last ten
20 years, I see the reality of the new architecture
21 providing for this new people-focused activity. The
22 General Project Plan provides the scale and
23 architecture to support that enormous energy. The
24 foundation of the plan is the streets, the sidewalks
25 and the public realm.

2 Reimagining the existing avenues and streets
3 as thoroughfares will connect Sixth Avenue and Herald
4 Square to Ninth Avenue and Hudson Yards. Pedestrian
5 focused with retail, public plazas and building
6 entrances into grand people spaces, this urban design
7 would be a purposeful place for cars, bikes, people,
8 subway and station entries. Forming the edge of
9 those streets is the architecture that engaged the
10 pedestrian with transparency, activity, complexity
11 and detail that accommodate a variety of experiences.

12 The General Purpose Plan reconnects the Penn
13 District to the city. More important, it connects
14 people who commute, work, live and visit this area
15 within the most exuberant city in the world. Thank
16 you very much.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Our next speaker will be Signe Nielsen.

20 And I can see you, you can just unmute and
21 let us know when you're ready to begin.

22 MS. NIELSEN: Good evening. Thank you for
23 allowing me to speak in favor of the General Project
24 Plan.

25 My name is Signe Nielsen. And I'm the

2 founding principal of MNLA, we're landscape
3 architects whose work focuses on the public realm.
4 I'm a lifelong New Yorker, as I know many of you are.

5 But let's face it, the area around Penn
6 Station and Madison Square Garden is crowded,
7 congested, noisy and uninviting. Have you gone there
8 for any reason other than transit or a sporting
9 event, that is other than the people who live there?
10 I sure haven't.

11 Now, imagine a scenario where pedestrians can
12 walk on wider sidewalks or even shared streets
13 without fear of getting plowed down by a taxi or
14 bumped aside by a commuter who's late for getting on
15 a train.

16 Imagine a place, this Penn Station area which
17 rebalances the value placed on people instead of cars
18 and trucks that actually invites you to linger,
19 pause, meet a friend, enjoy a beverage before a train
20 ride after work or as a resident.

21 This plan does just that. It accepts the New
22 York City street pattern as it is but reinvigorates
23 that public realm with generous public sidewalks,
24 shade trees, engaging retail and as just mentioned,
25 more than eight acres of open space. And that is

2 both -- I mean on the exterior.

3 But there are many competing demands on our
4 city's land. And I would recommend a public realm
5 working group comprised of residents, workers,
6 employers, property owners, public agencies and
7 elected officials to come together to forge a path
8 forward to embrace a new vision of the public realm.

9 I know change is difficult, but if there was
10 ever a district that could benefit from creative,
11 people-centric public realm transformation, it is
12 this one. Thank you.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Our next speaker will be James Galante from
16 Local 3.

17 I believe we may have -- if we don't have
18 James Galante -- we do perhaps have a different
19 representative from Local 3 who has just entered the
20 waiting room -- nope, here's James Galante. We can
21 see you but you're on mute.

22 Can our tech team invite -- yep. Okay.
23 You're good.

24 MR. GALANTE: All right. Thank you. Hello
25 New Yorkers. I'm James Galante, Local 3 member for

2 36 years. Electrician.

3 I'm all in favor for this project, being a
4 general foreman on the Second Avenue project subway
5 and the East Side Access. It is a major, major hub
6 for people to get transportation throughout the whole
7 United -- throughout New York City.

8 This is New York City, ladies and gentlemen,
9 and this is one of the best cities in the United
10 States. Let's get with the times. Build, build,
11 build and build. Build union and build with the
12 building trades that this nation has for us in place
13 to build a proper (indecipherable.)

14 That's all I have to say and let's -- I hope
15 everyone has a safe new year. Into the future we go.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 At this time we will begin our next set of
19 ten speakers. I'll read out all of the names of the
20 registered speakers:

21 Tito Delgado;
22 Hank Soderlund;
23 Nelson Eusebio;
24 James Simko;
25 Michael Kelly;

2 Joseph Olszewski;

3 Cleveland Cyrus;

4 Chris West;

5 Neil Hede;

6 Anthony Stewart.

7 Out of that group we have two registered
8 speakers who are not present, Tito Delgado and James
9 Simko.

10 If either of those registered speakers or a
11 representative is present, please email
12 help@publicworkspartners.com.

13 Our first registered speaker who is present
14 is Hank Soderlund.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hello.

16 MR. SODERLUND: Good evening. My name is
17 Hank Soderlund, I'm a representative of Local 3.

18 And I just want to say I'm in huge favor of
19 this Vornado project as long as its built at
20 prevailing wage for good union jobs with the approved
21 apprenticeship program that's going to bring good
22 economic value to the city.

23 I've lived and worked in the city for
24 approximately since 1989. And I can tell you, I've
25 never seen a project that was built in the city that

2 didn't revitalize the community, bring economic gains
3 to the community and especially -- and when we're
4 dealing with Penn Station. That's the hub where
5 people come to -- through to work, to go to school
6 and the first thing you see should be something that
7 is a little bit more professional than what we have.

8 So I think it will be a good thing for the
9 community. I'm totally in favor of this project and
10 I hope it brings good prevailing wage professional
11 jobs to the building trades.

12 Thank you very much and I appreciate your
13 time. Good evening.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Our next speaker will be Nelson Eusebio.

17 Yep. I can see you and now you're not muted
18 so go ahead when you're ready.

19 MR. EUSEBIO: Thank you for having this
20 forum. My name is Nelson Eusebio and I'm a lifelong
21 New Yorker. And I was raised in Queens, I raised my
22 family in Baldwin, Long Island, Nassau County.

23 I've been using mass transit for over 40
24 years, I worked in construction for over 27. I've
25 been the general foreman at 1 World Trade Center, the

2 United Nations, many different projects. And I would
3 tell you that I think this is a great opportunity to
4 create legacy for something for our children and
5 grandchildren to kind of look back on and say that we
6 made the right decision. That we look towards the
7 future and created green buildings and projects that
8 our great grandchildren could look back on and said
9 we did it correctly.

10 I think the critical part about that is
11 building trades and having good union jobs where we
12 can all support our families and I think it's always
13 critical to look back on the past and say that we
14 want to keep things a certain way. But it is so
15 critical to build for the future of our kids and
16 grandkids and then have something that is going to be
17 green technology and having buildings that are going
18 to sustain themselves and have these careers and ways
19 of kind of building for the future.

20 And I think that's why it's so critical for
21 this project of looking to the future, looking down
22 the road of what we need to have in our city to have
23 a green building and have communities that look
24 forward to the future. And I think moving this
25 project forward, hopefully having a Project Laborer

2 Agreement, hopefully having it pro-union, utilizing
3 the community, its interest is great and it's always
4 critical but we need to constantly build and look
5 towards the future.

6 And I think that's why we need to support
7 this and I think we need to make this a reality and
8 kind of bring it to fruition. And I look forward to
9 seeing this down the road and it being prosperous for
10 all. Thank you.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Our next speaker will be Joseph Olszewski.

14 Joseph Olszewski, you may let us know when --
15 you can unmute yourself and let us know when you're
16 ready to begin. We can see you and hear you.

17 MR. OLSZEWSKI: Great. Thank you for your
18 time, everyone.

19 Just wanted to give my little testimony as to
20 why I'm in favor of the project. My whole family for
21 five generations have been New Yorkers. We've been
22 construction workers and civil servants, we built
23 this city. Our blood, sweat and tears have gone into
24 it. Now it's my turn.

25 I'm following some other, you know, sisters

2 and brothers from my union, Local Number 3. These
3 guys have been around for awhile, I'm just starting
4 my career. Now that this project is including
5 affordable housing, I want to be able to build it, I
6 want my sisters and brothers to be able to build it
7 and my sisters and brothers are going to be able to
8 afford to live there too. And be able to use it as a
9 transportation hub and this seems like a win-win for
10 everybody. Thank you.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Our next speaker will be Cleveland Cyrus.

14 Cleveland Cyrus, you may unmute and let us
15 know when you're ready to begin.

16 MR. CYRUS: Ready to go.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yep. We can see and
18 hear you.

19 MR. CYRUS: Good evening everybody. My name
20 is Cleveland Cyrus. I'm a proud New Yorker and also
21 proud New York City trade -- trades member.

22 We need this project to move forward. This
23 city is in much need of a resurgence and that area
24 needs to be upkept, very dangerous. There's drugs in
25 that area, it should be cleaned.

2 And you know, it will do -- it will bring
3 wonders to this city, it will bring a different light
4 to this city, no pun intended. That area is a major
5 hub and it will connect all throughout the city. It
6 will be a vast improvement for our city -- which is
7 the leading city of the nation and will lead -- you
8 know, will continue to hold that forefront. I
9 strongly endorse this project.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 Our next speaker will be Chris West.

13 Okay. We can see you and now we should be
14 able to hear you.

15 MR. WEST: Thank you. Good evening. My name
16 is Chris West and I'm a partner at Foster and
17 Partners, an award-winning architecture and
18 engineering firm, founded by Norman Foster.

19 As a firm, we have done extensive work in
20 civic transport and infrastructure projects and
21 internationally, including Trafalgar Square and
22 Canary Wharf in London. And more recently the
23 Central Station in Sydney and the Slussen project in
24 Stockholm where we served as master planners and
25 architects.

2 I've been working on the Penn District master
3 plan for eight years here in New York along with my
4 team in London. Our work has been focused on the
5 blocks for the north and the east of the station.
6 And all of us at Foster & Partners enthusiastically
7 support Governor Hochul's vision to transform the
8 Penn District.

9 A transit-oriented development as proposed
10 here is the most sustainable development strategy for
11 any city. There is -- there are examples around the
12 world from London to Amsterdam and San Francisco, as
13 well as some of the more denser rail-focused cities
14 in Asia like Tokyo and Kyoto.

15 But even in New York, we have examples like
16 Grand Central in East Midtown and the World Trade
17 Center. So these are familiar and sensible concepts.

18 But out of all the cities we've researched in
19 the world, we have not found a single example with
20 the same level of connectivity as the Penn District.
21 The chance to connect eight different train lines
22 together between the subways and the trains is
23 unprecedented. So simply put, this is where the
24 density of future development in Manhattan really
25 should be.

2 And of course, Governor Hochul's proposal
3 also includes all the components needed to create a
4 vibrant mixed use community. It includes offices for
5 the future of work, new retail storefronts, nearly
6 2,000 residential units, entertainment destinations
7 and extensive new public space. The eight acres of
8 new public spaces, including the 30,000 square foot
9 plaza, pedestrianized streets, widened sidewalks,
10 protected bike lanes and trees.

11 The pedestrian experience will be completely
12 transformed. And fundamental to the design is that
13 these public spaces and buildings above ground work
14 together with the transit system below ground to make
15 it easy for people to find their way around.

16 Revitalizing transit infrastructure and
17 transforming this decayed urban realm for the
18 millions of users today and in the future is a truly
19 sustainable solution. This new district will be the
20 grand gateway to New York and a global model for a
21 green 21st century neighborhood. Thank you.

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Our next speaker will Neil Hede.

25 And we can already see you. You just unmute

2 and you can begin when you're ready.

3 MR. HEDE: Thank you, Celeste, for allowing
4 me to speak on this most important project. I'm from
5 Local Union Number 3, I'm a third generation
6 electrician.

7 I've been working in New York City for 36
8 years and I'm a resident of Manhattan for the last
9 12. I'm very active in my community board and I'm
10 very familiar with projects like this, I'd like to
11 speak my part.

12 I think it's imperative that this
13 revitalization of Penn Station goes through. It's
14 been far too long that New York has hung its laurels
15 on its past. Many major cities around the world are
16 outbuilding us in a very modern way. It's time we
17 moved into the 21st century.

18 And as far as green energy is considered,
19 this new product will be hundreds of times more
20 energy efficient than the existing buildings in its
21 place. So I feel this project will be a big win for
22 the Big Apple. Thank you.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Our next speaker will be Anthony Stewart.

2 Anthony Stewart, you may unmute.

3 MR. STEWART: Hello.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear you
5 but you may have two different audio devices going.

6 Hi, we can still see you. Can you -- go
7 ahead.

8 MR. STEWART: Yes. You can hear me?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. There's a lot of
10 feedback. Do you possibly have two -- like a
11 computer and a phone? And you can mute one.

12 MR. STEWART: No.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: That sounds better.

14 MR. STEWART: Can you hear me?

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

16 MR. STEWART: Okay. I'm not happy with this
17 project, I'm pissed off. Okay. There's nothing
18 wrong with this neighborhood, there's music -- I'm
19 blind. Okay.

20 My friends -- I'm coming to the studio to
21 rehearse, my friend [REDACTED] that lives in the studio
22 has been helping me, he's -- he's -- he's disabled,
23 he has a son that's disabled. He's been volunteering
24 for the blind center for us, for the vision impaired.
25 Okay.

2 I need my music because without my music I'm
3 nothing. I have a mental issue. Today's my father's
4 birthday, my father died years ago while I was
5 rehearsing. My mother is gone. Without my music,
6 I'm nothing, I'm nothing, okay. I call the Suicide
7 Hotline because I have mental issues.

8 You can't do this. Okay. You have no
9 capacity. That's all I gotta say.

10 MALE SPEAKER: And Anthony, we've been here
11 for five hours waiting to speak. The person is a
12 volunteer. These are both gentlemen from the center
13 for the blind on 23rd Street, we've been having
14 workshops with them here for five years.

15 This is my home, I'm an artist and resident
16 on 30th Street. Okay. Now, we've been sitting here,
17 waiting all night and I'm listening to people talk
18 about getting jobs and destroying our homes. Every
19 one of them, I'd like to come over right now and talk
20 to us. All you union electricians, because I'm an
21 electrician, and anybody that wants to destroy our
22 homes so you can get a job, there's something wrong
23 with you.

24 How do you know that there's something wrong
25 with you? Because we're telling you. Maybe you

2 didn't know before and you thought this was okay to
3 destroy 2,500 people's homes.

4 What do you think is going to happen if they
5 push this through? We will be out picketing in front
6 of Vornado. Steve Roth -- 2 Penn Plaza is right here
7 that they're fixing up, yet they're saying our
8 neighborhood is blighted.

9 These guys have been rehearsing and recording
10 here and in my band and I'm in their band. We donate
11 time to hundreds of musicians and benefits. Simon
12 Kirke from Bad Company, Arnold Hecht from the Rolling
13 Stones, they all rehearse here for free because they
14 help us with our projects.

15 We play Bikers Against Breast Cancer every
16 year for 20 years for Harley Davidson in New York.
17 Okay. I know a lot of you motorcycle guys are
18 electricians. Okay.

19 Why are all the electricians on here that
20 work for Vornado? I haven't heard one person say
21 that they wanted this project and didn't work for
22 Vornado.

23 Now, this is Robert over here. He's also
24 from the blind center, maybe he's got something to
25 say because we gotta sit here all night to wait for

2 our name again right after 200 people got to speak
3 about destroying our homes.

4 MR. WEEKES: I want to say something very
5 quickly. My name is Robert Weekes. I practice here.
6 We don't want this building to be tear down
7 (indecipherable). We don't have nowhere else to go.
8 We don't have nowhere else to do our rehearsal.

9 It's easy for me, I live on 23rd Street, I
10 walk across here. Do not tear this building down.
11 You have to stand up for us. All of us are blind.
12 Not tear it down.

13 MALE SPEAKER: You know what, it actually
14 seems like you people are harassing and trying to
15 terrify us.

16 Can you imagine, I wake up in the night and
17 this is what I think about, that you're going to make
18 us move and destroy our buildings. Moving is one of
19 the worse things that can happen to people.

20 Can you imagine being forced to move, I've
21 been living here 45 years. My son lives here most of
22 the time with me. He has cerebral palsy. We need
23 all our doctors here. These guys have nowhere to go.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you all for your
25 testimony. We appreciate the time and we do

2 appreciate everyone who has been patiently waiting
3 for your turns to speak.

4 We need to -- we're going to keep going so
5 everyone does have the opportunity to speak when
6 their turn -- when we get to their turn.

7 We're going to go to our next set of ten
8 speakers now and the next set of ten speakers are:

9 Adam Kurz;

10 Peter Myers;

11 Alfred Bastone;

12 Teresa Sanders;

13 David Manning;

14 Florence Cohen;

15 Vincent Ballard;

16 Marie Stareck;

17 Monica Bartley;

18 And Seri Worden.

19 Out of this list of ten registered speakers,
20 the following names are not present in the Zoom. If
21 you are that person, please send an email -- if you
22 are on this list, please send an email to
23 help@publicworkspartners.com so that we can find you
24 to speak.

25 So these names are not currently present:

2 Peter Myers;
3 Theresa Sanders;
4 Vincent Ballard;
5 Marie Stareck;
6 Seri Worden.

7 So we'll begin with the first speaker,
8 registered speaker who is present, Adam Kurz.

9 Adam Kurz, you may unmute yourself and let us
10 know when you're ready to begin.

11 MR. KURZ: Okay. One second please.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
13 you.

14 MR. KURZ: Okay. Perfect. Good evening,
15 everyone.

16 So thank you for coming tonight to this
17 meeting. It's a great thing that we have the ability
18 to talk about things that we obviously want to see
19 happen in New York City.

20 So my opinion on this project would be that
21 it's the greatest thing that we can see in New York
22 City to revitalize that area. I travel through Penn
23 Station every single morning weekly and I see an
24 unbelievable amount of -- I guess infrastructure work
25 that needs to be refixed.

2 There is the -- probably this is the busiest
3 hub in the east coast of all of America, the United
4 States of America. So one of the things that you see
5 when you come into New York City is a crowd of people
6 trying to find their way places.

7 I think this project will bring a great
8 opportunity to revitalize the community. When we see
9 areas like, for example, if we go into Times Square.
10 If you went back 25 or 30 years ago, the
11 revitalization of Times Square has totally changed
12 that area for the better. This is a project that
13 will bring strength, will bring obviously good jobs,
14 providing that we bring it in that direction and it
15 will bring an area that needs so much I guess
16 revitalization.

17 I don't think that the community that lives
18 there should be so affected in a bad way. I think
19 what they should do is work with the active group of
20 people who are trying to move us forward and see that
21 this city develops into what it should be. And it is
22 the greatest city on earth.

23 New York City is a place where people come
24 from everywhere. You want to come into a city where
25 you can absolutely see a beautiful entranceway into

2 the rest of the greatest city and the greatest people
3 on earth. This is a place that needs people to
4 rebuild and restructure and bring forward an
5 opportunity for people to have great union jobs.

6 I work in a mentoring program where we take
7 young people and give them an opportunity to forward
8 their lives. I can't tell you how many lives this
9 has changed for people and I think we need to move
10 forward with this project.

11 It seems to me like it's a no-brainer, to
12 stand strong and get the funded money which will make
13 New York City what New York City should be.

14 Thank you all. Build it strong, build it
15 union and build it with the Building and Construction
16 Trades Council. Thanks again.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Our next speaker will be Alfred Bastone.

20 Alfred Bastone, you may unmute yourself and
21 let us know when you're ready to begin.

22 MR. BASTONE: Can you see me?

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see your
24 background but we can hear you.

25 MR. BASTONE: I guess -- I guess I'll flip

2 the camera. Okay. Am I on screen?

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, now we can see
4 you.

5 MR. BASTONE: So yeah, my name is Alfred
6 Bastone. I am a fourth generation building trades
7 member and I'm a lifelong New Yorker. I'm from the
8 Bronx and I live in Manhattan now.

9 I've worked as a shop steward in the Moynihan
10 Station, the current facility I helped do the
11 repairs. I helped do the reconstruction. I just
12 wanted to say that New York is about, you know, for
13 the working class people in this city, it's about the
14 jobs that we can do with our hands.

15 And one of the biggest jobs that makes New
16 York, the workers of New York able to provide a real
17 living allows me to move from the Bronx to Gramercy
18 to Manhattan is working with my hands, working in
19 construction, building it union and the unions are
20 very strong here in New York.

21 So I -- I've been in Penn Station nearly -- I
22 go by there nearly once a week at least, at least,
23 probably more than that. And it's in the middle of
24 blight, it's in the middle of disrepair, disfunction
25 all the way around. It shouldn't be that way when

2 we're talking about the -- the millions of people
3 that pass through that station monthly, the traffic
4 that goes through there, it is a center of commercial
5 traffic that has around it really no commercial
6 infrastructure really to benefit from it.

7 I know I would like to sometimes hang around
8 near the station but, you know, most of the time you
9 can't. You just have to shuttle yourself into a
10 corner somewhere around underground, especially in
11 the winters in the cold to just avoid what's outside.
12 I mean literally, I've seen people at this point in
13 time right now when we're talking about what is the
14 area, publicly using heroin in the area. So I mean,
15 that's the state of what the neighborhood is in. And
16 people can try to mince it any sort of way about the
17 community and what they're a part of.

18 And I get it, I understand that, but the city
19 is always changing. I myself, I love art deco
20 buildings, I love that type of structure. But
21 ultimately, we move into the future, we're building
22 new things, if we're staying -- if we're lagging
23 behind, if the infrastructure is lagging behind, this
24 city begins to die. And I don't want that as an
25 actual New Yorker. I don't want that. I want to

2 make sure that people generations from me are pulled
3 up. And you know, if they can make a working class
4 living, they can make a working class living, so
5 that's from my angle. So in that respect, we need to
6 develop Penn Station, that's for sure.

7 In regards to the Vornado Realty
8 opportunities that are being speculated upon by that
9 firm, hopefully the -- the state allows there to be
10 forces of -- PLAs upon the work that's permitted.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

12 MR. BASTONE: So that's where I'm coming
13 from. Hopefully we all agree, expand Penn Station,
14 do the work and if the -- whatever happens with the
15 Vornado Realty, we need the PLAs. Thank you.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 Our next speaker will be David Manning.
19 David Manning.

20 MR. MANNING: Yes. Thank you.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: We see and hear you.

22 MR. MANNING: Thank you very much.

23 My name is David Manning and I'm a resident
24 of both New York City and Long Island. I'd like to
25 speak in favor of the project as an individual,

2 although I do work for a major research laboratory on
3 Long Island.

4 New York has become and is being restored as
5 a real estate technology center. Young innovative
6 companies and individuals are returning to New York
7 from Silicon Valley from the west coast because
8 there's tremendous opportunity here to innovate and
9 the jobs that come with it.

10 And of course if the city is to provide a
11 level of services that it must provide, it needs that
12 kind of growth and it needs those kind of innovative
13 companies such as Google and Amazon who are actually
14 hiring here.

15 So due south of Penn Station you have the
16 Washington DC through Boston corridor. That rail
17 length connects all the pharmaceutical research
18 companies and manufacturers of New Jersey right at
19 the end of the city. You go north, you get to the
20 128 corridor around Boston. Again that's the home of
21 a lot of research and technology positions.

22 Then you go out to Long Island and you've got
23 Cold Spring Harbor, world class reputation.
24 Brookhaven National Laboratory, the Feinstein
25 Institute, Northwell Health, Stony Brook University.

2 So that is the Long Island technology corridor.

3 So all of these research and technology
4 corridors converge in that one spot, Penn Station.

5 So now we're bringing in Cornell, Roosevelt Island,
6 all the other developments taking place just south of
7 Penn Station, that the completion of the
8 revitalization of Penn Station and the area around it
9 is critical to that growth for the city.

10 Those jobs -- not just construction jobs,
11 it's those kind of innovative jobs that are going to
12 be coming back to New York because they're attracted
13 here by that opportunity and the city has to meet
14 that demand.

15 And Penn Station, I -- I was a daily user of
16 Penn Station for close to 15 years, I've worked in
17 offices right on 34th Street for two to three of
18 those years. I'm very familiar with the challenges
19 of Penn Station. I'm also very familiar with what it
20 looks like today and I'm truly excited by what's
21 already happened there. But that has to be completed
22 and it needs private resources to do.

23 And that kind of open space and that kind of
24 access that this plan is going to provide is going to
25 be an economic driver for this city. And as I said,

2 if the city is to provide the city what the entire
3 city deserves and needs, it's going to need that tax
4 base. It's going to need those innovative jobs that
5 are longterm.

6 Construction jobs are terrific, we've heard
7 from them all evening. But more importantly, we need
8 sustainable jobs. This is just the kind of
9 development that does that and Penn Station is
10 critically and ideally situated. As I said, this is
11 the absolute nexus of all these different research
12 corridors.

13 Thank you very much. I appreciate the time
14 you're putting in and I appreciate the attention of
15 all the people who are given the opportunity to give
16 their feelings. Most appreciate it.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 Our next speaker will be Florence Cohen.

20 Florence Cohen, you may unmute and let us
21 know when you're ready to begin.

22 MS. COHEN: Hello.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. We can hear you.

24 MS. COHEN: Okay. I learned some things
25 tonight by listening to my fellow commentators and

2 Googling, Googling the Pennsylvania Hotel. Emptied
3 of its content a few months ago and waiting to be
4 demolished by its owners, Vornado Realty.

5 Steve Roth donated \$70,000, the maximum to
6 Governor Hochul's campaign for Governor. It seems
7 like that's the reason we should put up nine office
8 buildings in a neighborhood that doesn't need anymore
9 high-rise buildings with offices that will stay
10 empty.

11 I live in Chelsea. That's one reason I know
12 that the area does not need any more office
13 buildings. What the area needs are more developments
14 with affordable apartments like at Penn South where I
15 live.

16 Now, I'm in favor of fixing up Pennsylvania
17 Station, but not at the expense of putting up all
18 these buildings for which there is no reason. If
19 buildings are supposed to go up to help a
20 neighborhood that's starving, this is not the
21 neighborhood that needs it.

22 And people have been talking about the Hudson
23 Hudson Yards. Now, Hudson Yards was a lot of
24 railroad tracks that are sitting there with no use.
25 So they built up that area. But Chelsea is not like

2 that, it's not sitting around without any use. There
3 are people here, the musicians on 30th Street that
4 shouldn't be dislocated to put up these buildings
5 that are not necessary. And I think if they go up,
6 it will be called Hochul's Hoax.

7 And then when I think of Vornado Realty
8 buying the Pennsylvania Hotel with the idea of
9 destroying it by letting it go empty, I feel so bad.
10 Because this was a building that stood up for many
11 years and it can still be standing. It can be
12 remodeled. It shouldn't be torn down.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Our next speaker will be Monica Bartley.
16 Monica Bartley.

17 MS. BARTLEY: Good evening. Can you see me?

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. Well, we can see
19 the room that you're in.

20 MS. BARTLEY: Yeah.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: And we can hear you.

22 MS. BARTLEY: Oh really? Why can you not see
23 me?

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can just see a
25 table.

2 There you are.

3 MS. BARTLEY: Yes.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Much better.

5 MS. BARTLEY: Good evening, everyone. My
6 name is Monica Bartley. Thank you for giving me the
7 opportunity to speak here tonight. I am the manager
8 of community organizers at the Center For
9 Independence of the Disabled New York, CIDNY for
10 short.

11 I present this testimony on behalf of our
12 executive director, Dr. Sharon McLennon-Weir. We
13 will be submitting written testimony within the
14 deadline, the stated deadline.

15 CIDNY is the leading advocate for New Yorkers
16 of all ages with all types of disabilities. CIDNY's
17 goal is to ensure full integration, independence and
18 equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by
19 removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural
20 and civic life of the community.

21 I endorse the accessibility issues raised by
22 my colleague Jean Ryan earlier, regarding the overlay
23 of the slides which makes it difficult for people
24 with visual disabilities to read. And the disabling
25 of captioning that makes it difficulty for people who

2 are hard of hearing.

3 I am a wheelchair user and navigating Penn
4 Station has always posed a difficulty for New York's
5 disability community who have been waiting a long
6 time, far too long for basic essential improvements
7 to Penn Station to ensure they're granted equal
8 access to every part of the complex.

9 Way finding is difficult and the lack of
10 elevators is a problem. The platforms are narrow and
11 overcrowded, filled with massive columns and
12 confusing signage. And the passageways that create
13 dangerous conditions for everyone, particularly
14 people with disabilities that have to carefully
15 navigate obstacle after obstacle.

16 The proposed plans for the transformation at
17 street level, including widened and improved
18 sidewalks as well as more public space that will make
19 the surrounding district more accessible will benefit
20 people with disabilities and we encourage their
21 inclusion and involvement in -- in the design of the
22 space to ensure it is user friendly for people with
23 disabilities.

24 CIDNY supports a plan that creates
25 accessibility. However, as you begin to redesign and

2 construct the Penn Station improvement district,
3 please consider universal design features for
4 accessibility that will enable all users of this
5 transportation hub to enjoy and travel safely to
6 their destination.

7 We will be submitting a detailed list of what
8 is required to make it accessible. Thank you very
9 much.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 Our next speaker will be Anne Nelson, who is
13 speaking on behalf of Seri Worden.

14 After that we will take another short ten
15 minute recess and then return for the next set of
16 speakers.

17 So Anne Nelson, you may unmute and begin when
18 you're ready.

19 MS. NELSON: Thank you. My name is Anne
20 Nelson, I'm an attorney with the National Trust for
21 Historic Preservation, speaking on behalf of Seri
22 Worden.

23 The National Trust for Historic Preservation
24 appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on
25 the General Project Plan for the Pennsylvania Station

2 area civic and land improvement project being
3 proposed by ESD.

4 Congress chartered the National Trust in 1949
5 as a private nonprofit organization to facilitate
6 public participation and historic preservation and to
7 further the purposes of federal historic preservation
8 laws.

9 With the strong support of over a million
10 supporters and members nationwide, the National Trust
11 works to protect significant places representing our
12 diverse cultural experience by taking direct action
13 and inspiring broad public support.

14 This is an occasion that calls for this kind
15 of advocacy. ESD's project proposes to largely
16 demolish nine Manhattan tax blocks with the purpose
17 of transforming and revitalizing what they claim is a
18 substandard and unsanitary area in and around Penn
19 Station.

20 However, the majority of the area -- the
21 buildings in the project area have been determined to
22 be in good to fair condition. While we certainly
23 agree that parts of the project area will benefit
24 from revitalization, particularly the subterrains of
25 Penn Station, we oppose the plan's proposal to

2 demolish several city blocks and build new high-rise
3 construction.

4 The ESD's approach is hauntingly reminiscent
5 of the failed urban renewal strategy of the 1960s.
6 In fact, as stated by many people tonight, the
7 pre-pandemic plan to build new office towers seems
8 painfully dated and irrelevant now.

9 In our opinion, many of the goals of the
10 project can be achieved through a more thoughtful
11 plan that will combine the rehabilitation of historic
12 structures with narrowly-targeted demolitions and
13 possibly areas of new construction.

14 By contrast, the current plan would have
15 devastatingly adverse effects on at least 13 National
16 Register eligible and two National Register listed
17 historic buildings, along with significant adverse
18 affects to the view shed of the Empire State
19 Building, which is a National Historic Landmark, our
20 highest federal designation.

21 We also have concerns about the project's
22 compliance with the federal environmental review
23 process as outlined in our recent letter to ESD.
24 Both the plan and the draft EIS acknowledge that the
25 project involves federal transportation funding

2 and/or approvals in the future which will result in
3 reviews under federal, environmental and historic
4 preservation laws.

5 Given the complexity of the entire project
6 and the knowledge that there will be federal
7 involvement, we strongly recommend that ESD work with
8 federal transportation agencies to ensure that the
9 federal review processes are coordinated in advance.
10 Failing to do this now creates a risk that these
11 federal funds and approvals would have to be rejected
12 in the future because of anticipatory demolition and
13 improper segmentation.

14 We thank you for considering the National
15 Trust comments and we urge you to substantially
16 modify the plans in order to avoid and minimize the
17 magnitude of destruction and other adverse effects
18 that are proposed to this area. Thank you.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 At this time it is 10:42 p.m. We have
22 approximately remaining 110 registered speakers. We
23 are going to go on a ten-minute recess and I would
24 remind -- I would remind speakers and participants
25 that you may -- you may submit your testimony in

2 writing to via email or mail, including to:
3 Pennstationarea@ESD.NY.GOV. Written testimony will
4 be afforded the same consideration as verbal
5 testimony given here tonight.

6 With that said, we will now go on break.
7 It's 10:43 p.m. We will resume the hearing at
8 10:53 p.m. and will begin with our next set of ten
9 speakers. Thank you.

10 (Whereupon, a short break was taken.)

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good evening. Welcome
12 back to the second public hearing for the Penn
13 Station Redevelopment General Project Plan and draft
14 EIS and proposed changes to the plan.

15 Our next set of ten speakers -- well, first,
16 before we dive into the next set of ten speakers, I'd
17 like to thank everyone for bearing with us and assure
18 everyone that we will do our best to afford everyone
19 the opportunity to provide your testimony. And I'd
20 like also to remind everyone that the Empire State
21 Development project team is present and is listening
22 to the verbal testimony as they have been during this
23 entire hearing.

24 So thank you again.

25 And our next list of registered speakers

2 includes:

3 Mariann Perseo;

4 David Moog;

5 Thomas Lunke;

6 Kathleen Cahill;

7 Excuse me. Ronnie Wuerch;

8 Hal Brom;

9 Mike Fornatale;

10 Jean Lum;

11 Francie Scanlon;

12 Valerie Jackson.

13 Based on this list, it appears as though the
14 following names are not currently present:

15 Mariann Perseo;

16 Mike Fornatale;

17 Francie Scanlon;

18 Valerie Jackson.

19 If your name was called on this second list
20 please email help@publicworkspartners.com to let us
21 know so that we can find you.

22 So the first registered speaker who's present
23 is David Moog.

24 David Moog, you may unmute yourself and
25 begin.

2 MR. MOOG: Okay. Can you hear and see me?

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

4 MR. MOOG: Hello, I'm David Moog. I'm a
5 retired New York City tax assessor and also the
6 former County Assessor of Nassau.

7 The purpose of rebuilding Penn Station is to
8 allow the additional capacity to the gateway tunnel.
9 But it's been shown by various engineers' groups that
10 if you made Penn Station a through station rather
11 than a terminal station, having Long Island Railroad
12 trains terminate in Secaucus rather than -- and New
13 Jersey Transit trains terminate in (technical
14 difficulties) you get the same capacity in the
15 present station.

16 So the real problem is not the surrounding
17 buildings around Penn Station, it's the actual reason
18 that Madison Square Garden is on top of Penn Station.
19 If we remove Madison Square Garden from Penn Station
20 and rebuild the station, you can then have the
21 increased capacity and open up the air and light for
22 the Penn Station commuters.

23 Furthermore, I have apprehension with the
24 fact that most of these developments require longterm
25 exemptions in the property, as well as bonds being

2 paid for with the tax payments that would normally go
3 to the city coffers going to pay for the
4 infrastructure around the station.

5 So in the longterm, like in Hudson Yards,
6 this becomes a basic financial loser for the
7 taxpayers of New York City because they need to make
8 up a difference of the lost tax revenue that the
9 buildings presently pay around Penn Station.

10 So I'm against the project and I believe that
11 you can increase the capacity of the present station
12 when the new gateway tunnel comes in by making it a
13 through station, having Long Island Railroad trains
14 going to Secaucus, making it easier for New Jersey
15 commuters to get to Long Island and New Jersey trains
16 to terminate in Sunnyside where they're presently
17 stored in the Sunnyside railroad yard.

18 And just basically move Madison Square Garden
19 to a new location in which there are several
20 locations throughout the city that are near transit
21 hubs and antiquated Madison Square Garden could be
22 demoed and put in a new arena that would be more
23 state of the art.

24 Thank you for your time and good luck.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your

2 testimony.

3 Our next speaker will be Thomas Lunke or
4 Lunka.

5 Thomas Lunke.

6 MR. LUNKE: Yes, do you see me?

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
8 you. So you may begin.

9 MR. LUNKE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

10 My name is Tom Lunke. Thank you for holding
11 this hearing and thank you to my neighbors for
12 speaking out tonight. We are following the advice
13 Jane Jacobs once told me, beware of the abstract.

14 As a 30-year resident of Chelsea, having
15 spent 40 years studying and practicing urban planning
16 and community development, I witnessed real estate
17 schemes destroy neighborhoods, residents, business
18 people and landscapes.

19 Looking at -- looking at the soul numbing
20 Hudson Yards with its dead zones, failed shopping
21 mall, disconnection with the historic neighborhood
22 fabric and even suicides, I fear the same conclusions
23 for the Penn Station District if the proposed plan
24 goes forward without significant revisions.

25 Hundreds of millions of our tax dollars are

2 being used to subsidize Hudson Yards as a global
3 edifice to institutional investors. This is not what
4 we were promised. We were assured that this
5 redevelopment would pay for itself and add to our tax
6 revenue.

7 Please don't continue to subsidize the market
8 through linkages to faulty real estate speculation.
9 Take a more holistic and sensitive project through
10 our city and state legislatures and put line items in
11 the budgets to encourage more oversight.

12 Let's finally disband toxic Robert Moses era
13 urban removal and create a fine-grain approach to
14 planning here, focusing any government-financed
15 redevelopment solely on the Penn Station block.
16 Thank you.

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Our next speaker will be Kathleen Cahill.
20 You may unmute and let us know when you're ready and
21 we'll just need to get ready to restart the time
22 clock.

23 (No response.)

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Our next speaker
25 will be Ronnie Wuerch from Local 3. Ronnie Wuerch.

2 Do we have Ronnie Wuerch?

3 (No response.)

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. Our next speaker
5 will be Hal Bromm.

6 Hal Bromm, you may unmute yourself and let us
7 know you're ready to begin.

8 Hi. We can see and hear you.

9 MR. BROMM: Thank you. The loss of
10 architecturally important structures need not be the
11 price we pay for improving the subterranean mess that
12 is Penn Station itself, a sad result of demolishing a
13 masterpiece, the real Penn Station.

14 A world class city like New York must learn
15 from past mistakes and stop destroying historic
16 viable buildings. Sadly, this plan does not exhibit
17 such enlightened thinking. It must be reconsidered
18 to meet the real needs of our city, not those of
19 Vornado who stand to profit from our city's losses.

20 Last year, Anne Lacaton and Jean-Phillipe
21 Vassal, architects who have never demolished a
22 building in order to construct a new one, won the
23 Pritzker prize. The jury lauded their commitment to
24 restorative architecture that is technological,
25 innovative and ecologically responsive.

2 Visionaries like Lacaton and Vassal have
3 shown us that adaptive reuse of existing structures
4 provides thousands of jobs, proving what has been
5 clear since the New York City Landmarks Law was
6 passed, preservation pays. Adaptive reuse gives us
7 the greatest buildings, the ones we already have.

8 A report by the National Trust found that
9 reusing an existing building and upgrading it to be
10 as efficient as possible is almost always the best
11 choice, regardless of building type or climate. We
12 know this is true.

13 So why is the McKim, Mead & White Hotel
14 Pennsylvania, a massive structure of nearly 500,000
15 square feet slated for demolition? This is a shear
16 waste on a staggering scale. The senseless
17 demolition of a building that could be upgraded,
18 retrofitted and modernized at far less cost, both
19 financially and environmentally.

20 How does such gross waste address the need
21 for intelligent planning? To reduce the carbon
22 emissions or provide affordable housing?

23 Converting the hotel would provide an
24 impressive first step toward affordable housing goals
25 while providing thousands of jobs and the Hotel

2 Pennsylvania is only one of many significant
3 structures to be demolished under this proposal,
4 erasing the historic fabric of the area and
5 displacing its residents.

6 It is misguided, wasteful and a dagger in the
7 heart of historic midtown, the most un-green plan
8 imaginable. It cries out for reconsideration on
9 every level and I join thousands of fellow citizens
10 in demanding that this proposal be replaced by an
11 environmentally intelligent plan that restores our
12 historic structures and adaptively reuses them. Our
13 city deserves nothing less. Thank you.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 The next speaker will be Jean Lum.

17 Jean Lum. You may unmute and let us know
18 when you're ready to start.

19 MS. LUM: Hi.

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Hi. We can hear you.

21 MS. LUM: Hi. I'm Jean Lum. I'm a resident
22 in Site 2 on A Avenue. I also am against this plan.

23 So far what I'm hearing the people who
24 propose the plan, they don't live here. They are
25 either from construction unions or they're commuters.

2 They don't have to experience the pain and the losses
3 of relocation. You know, some of those people who
4 don't have the ability to relocate physically, mental
5 or financially, they can cannot experience these.

6 Since pandemic, many office jobs can be done
7 from home or offsite and many companies plan to
8 continue this plan and they rather invest in IT
9 technology. So the number of commuters will be
10 reduced significantly and they already reduced since
11 2019, so MTA should have these numbers already.

12 And as we know, many modern cities around the
13 world, they build transportation hub outside of the
14 old city so they could avoid the congested city
15 center and we all know it will be easier construction
16 and cost effective, so they should look for
17 alternative outside this area without the destruction
18 of the buildings.

19 And my last comment is, when will the NEPA
20 report be available? Because the draft EIS, some
21 table show construction will start soon. So does it
22 mean the project will proceed without approval of the
23 NEPA report?

24 So that's all my comments and I will submit
25 this in December to the ESD. Thank you. Thank you

2 for staying up all night.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: And thank you for your
4 testimony and for staying with it.

5 So that -- that completes the speakers on the
6 current list who are present in the hearing. So we
7 will move to the next set of speakers.

8 The next set of speakers, the next set of
9 speakers, a number of them are not present. So I'll
10 first just read the ones who we believe are present
11 in the meeting and then I'll also read the ones who
12 are not present separately.

13 On this list of ten speakers we have; Tierra
14 Willaims, George Bulow -- Tierra Williams and George
15 Bulow who are present in the meeting.

16 Based on this list, it appears as though the
17 following names are not present. If you are present,
18 please email help@publicworkspartners.com, to let us
19 know:

20 So Edward Parran;

21 Giuseppe Pierno;

22 Jake Oren Mansoor;

23 Katherine Smethurst;

24 Laura Helms;

25 Jonathan Marder;

2 Bonnie Webber;

3 And Carol Straley.

4 If you're on that list of eight names, please
5 email help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know.

6 And so we'll move the first speaker who is
7 present, Tierra Williams.

8 Tierra Williams, you may unmute and let us
9 know you're ready to begin.

10 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi. Can you hear me?

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, good night everyone. My
13 name is Tierra Williams and I'm a proud New Yorker
14 and a member of the Local 79 Laborers.

15 I've been able to build a better life for
16 myself and raise a family thanks to the benefits of
17 being a non -- being a union member in the
18 construction industry. This wasn't always the case
19 for me, as I used to work in non-union construction.

20 The pay and working conditions did not match
21 the wealth and glamour of the buildings that I worked
22 at. I didn't have the benefits necessary to provide
23 healthcare for my family and have the option of
24 retiring from a background industry one day.

25 Joining the union has made a difference in my

2 life and that of so many others. We earn a better
3 living, have better benefits that bring healthcare
4 and the option of retirement and safer working
5 conditions.

6 The Penn Station redevelopment can provide
7 these opportunities for so many New Yorkers. If it
8 includes a Project Labor Agreement, with the PLA, the
9 construction union -- construction workers rebuilding
10 Penn Station will earn family sustaining wages and
11 benefits.

12 I urge Empire State Development to pass the
13 project with the Project Labor Agreement to help
14 hardworking New Yorkers like myself achieve
15 prosperity. Thank you.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 We're going to take a short moment now to
19 switch the recording, so you may see a message that
20 the recording is going to begin again. It's just
21 that we're switching from one background computer to
22 another. Okay. And I think we're all set. Thank
23 you.

24 Our next speaker will be George Bulow.

25 George Bulow, you may unmute and let us know

2 you're ready to begin.

3 MR. BULOW: All right. I'm now unmuted.

4 Only my video is now -- now my video is on.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
6 you.

7 MR. BULOW: Sorry about that. First of all,
8 my honors to you, all of you. I think if your
9 service has the ability to give a bronze star, you
10 should all have earned it this evening for having put
11 up with so many hours of it and what's going to be
12 continuing.

13 I'm an independent historian with a specialty
14 in transportation and as a subset of that,
15 particularly the infrastructure about transportation
16 projects. And the question I've long asked myself
17 is: What happens in the democracy when you build a
18 major infrastructure project and it effects a
19 minority of people.

20 So here's a textbook example of what goes on
21 and it's been fascinating to listen to the process,
22 et cetera. I am very family with the property in
23 many, many ways. I've been looking at it since I was
24 a little boy. I even remember the old Penn Station.

25 But I'm very familiar with a lot of the new

2 things that have been going on, but was not aware of
3 what had been announced since Governor Hochul took
4 the reins from Governor Cuomo. I didn't know about
5 the plan until a day or two ago.

6 So I actually spent the last day or two
7 reading it and listening to what people had to say
8 and I had a few thoughts:

9 First of all, Samuel Ray and Alexander
10 Garrett were the people from the Pennsylvania
11 Railroad who took some interesting neighborhoods.
12 They took what was called Sultan's Circus and we also
13 think of it as being the Tenderloin, a notorious
14 area.

15 So the people who talk about how a
16 neighborhood changes have clearly not thought about
17 the past, what it had been before Pennsylvania
18 Station was created. So just a source of some
19 amusement to me historically that we now have people
20 protesting about the existing buildings that are on
21 the site.

22 It's remarkably complex problem. Not so much
23 the ownership, Amtrak does own the terminal, it has
24 the tracks and the rest. But the way that the
25 different transportation agencies, both New Jersey

2 Transit and MTA/Long Island Railroad have to work
3 with Amtrak is quite remarkable.

4 For all the federal moneys that are coming
5 in, for all the different ways they are coming in and
6 for all the different projects that they underlie, it
7 is very interesting to see how EDC has now worked out
8 what it is proposing, along with the proposed
9 possible developer depending on their bids.

10 That New Jersey Transit is going to do with
11 30th Street what they need, which is to add the
12 tracks that fit inside the interlocking that allows
13 the room to be done makes a lot of sense. As does
14 the possible proposal to take those sites by eminent
15 domain, attach them to the term -- to the station
16 better and be able to use them. So I thought that
17 was quite good.

18 The overall project as I see it is a boon to
19 New York --

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: 15 seconds.

21 MR. BULOW: It is obvious that a hub like
22 that is an attractor for jobs and people and a
23 project of this sort should go forward.

24 My only concern is possibly about the
25 continuation of Madison Square Garden. And I thank

2 you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. And you may
4 submit additional testimony in writing via email or
5 US mail. All right. Thank you.

6 We're going to move to our next set of ten
7 speakers now. Excuse me. One moment. Okay. So on
8 this list I will actually go ahead and read all ten
9 names, because we have a smaller number who are --
10 who are not currently present:

11 Myles Zhang;
12 Penn Rhodeen;
13 Jayasri Ganapathy;
14 Robert Weekes;
15 Carlo Dano;
16 Salvatore Migliaccio;
17 MJ Watkins;
18 Angela Curtis;
19 Johanna Climenko;
20 And Samir Khadra or Hadra.

21 Of the -- based on this list it appears that
22 that the following names are not present:

23 Miles Zhang;
24 Penn Rhodeen;
25 Jayasri Ganapathy;

2 Salvatore Migliaccio.

3 If your name was on that list, please email
4 help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know how to
5 include you as a speaker.

6 Our first speaker who is present will be
7 Robert Weekes.

8 Robert Weekes, you may unmute and let us know
9 when you're ready to begin.

10 (No response.)

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Robert Weekes.

12 FEMALE SPEAKER: You're on, you're on.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yup, we can hear you
14 and see you.

15 MR. WEEKES: My name is Robert Weekes. You
16 hear me?

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear you.
18 You may begin.

19 MR. WEEKES: I want to say this is my home.
20 We are in a little tight situation here. This is our
21 home, don't want you to destruct our situation. I'm
22 blind. We need this to do what we have to do. This
23 is our home. I live on 30th Street.

24 Right now this is the place where we do our
25 music. I want to say I have my volunteers with me.

2 We have Steve Marshall. Can you help me out with the
3 situation?

4 MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, I'd just like to speak
5 again because I'm helping out these guys. I'm here
6 to protect them. They are -- I'm here to protect
7 these guys.

8 So all you people talking about the jobs
9 you want, come and see me before you go talking
10 about the jobs and destroying our homes and our
11 place where we make music so you can have a job.
12 There's thousands of jobs here already and thousands
13 of people living here and hundreds of businesses.

14 What right do you have to come and destroy
15 our homes and our businesses? Who are you people?

16 And this guy talking about eminent domain;
17 how would all of you people, every one of you that's
18 backing up Vornado, like us to come to your house
19 and talk about destroying your house? How would you
20 react, would you not be as upset as we are?

21 Not to mention they're going to destroy
22 this whole area. It will be a crater twice the size
23 of the World Trade Center when it was destroyed --

24 FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah. We don't -- we don't
25 want toxic dust --

2 MR. MARSHALL: With asbestos everywhere --

3 FEMALE SPEAKER: -- all over our
4 neighborhood.

5 MR. MARSHALL: -- of what a great job they're
6 doing to do. They are going to cause cancer to
7 everybody within a 20 block radius.

8 FEMALE SPEAKER: You are making people
9 homeless. You are ruining our community.

10 MR. MARSHALL: You're trying to make us
11 homeless. Why are homeless people crazy? Because
12 they've been kicked out of their homes.

13 MALE SPEAKER: You have no compassion.

14 MR. MARSHALL: What is wrong with you people?
15 Why are you people trying to do this to us --

16 FEMALE SPEAKER: We have a thriving
17 community.

18 MR. MARSHALL: They did this to the Native
19 Americans. This is what the Nazis did. What are you
20 going to do? Herd us into cattle cars and take us
21 away and destroy our homes? Where are you going to
22 put us --

23 (Crosstalk)

24 MR. WEEKES: -- the trains aren't going to
25 run outside. The train -- everything is underground

2 so why do they have to destroy the whole building?

3 FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah, this is not about Penn
4 Station.

5 MR. MARSHALL: You know what, you're not
6 taking away our music.

7 FEMALE SPEAKER: This is about West 30th
8 Street, not Penn Station. The destruction of Penn
9 Station is -- the renovation of Penn Station has
10 nothing to do with the destruction of 30th Street.
11 Stop the demolition of 30th Street. This is nothing
12 but greed. This is a landgrab and we're not going to
13 take it.

14 MR. WEEKES: (Inaudible.)

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Ten
16 seconds.

17 MR. MARSHALL: Don't destroy our homes.

18 FEMALE SPEAKER: Don't destroy our homes.
19 Don't destroy our --

20 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
21 testimony. You may submit written testimony also to
22 the email or mail address if you would like.

23 Our next speaker will be Carlo Dano or Dayno.

24 MR. DANO: Hey, I'm unmuted.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can hear you.

2 You may begin.

3 MR. DANO: All right. Hi. My name is Carlo
4 Dano, I'm a musician, actor and artist who has been
5 living in New York City since 1976.

6 What attracted me to New York City in 1976
7 was the vibrant pulse and feel of its neighborhoods
8 and communities, not tall, soulless towers. Now
9 we're poised to have Albany destroy yet another
10 neighborhood and community.

11 Gentrification and corporate landgrabs have
12 been destroying the pulse of New York City since the
13 '80s. Sure, Penn Station needs to be upgraded but
14 not at the expense of poor and disabled residents
15 being displaced.

16 Earlier this evening someone stated that a
17 new Penn Station will help address mass transit
18 delays that effect employers. The building doesn't
19 create problems with mass transit, the bureaucracy in
20 Albany does that. Now besides screwing up our mass
21 transit, Albany wants to destroy yet another
22 neighborhood community.

23 What about the churches and other landmark
24 buildings? What about the disabled? What about
25 what's left of communities? What about the artistic

2 communities that helped make New York City the
3 capital of the world? That's all I have to say.

4 I hope that people will reconsider. I've
5 heard many alternate proposals tonight about
6 relocating Madison Square Garden and building Penn
7 Station up. Not destroying communities with
8 high-rise towers. Thank you.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Great. Thank you for
10 your testimony.

11 Our next speaker will be MJ Watkins who I
12 think may not be present at this time.

13 So our next speaker will be Angela Curtis.
14 Angela Curtis, you may unmute and let us know when
15 you're ready.

16 (No response.)

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Our next speaker will
18 be Johanna Climenko.

19 Johanna Climenko, you may unmute and let us
20 know when you're ready.

21 (No response.)

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Johanna Climenko.

23 (No response.)

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: All right. Our next
25 speaker will be Samir Khadra.

2 Samir Hadra or Khadra. Let us know when
3 you're ready to begin.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: At this time we'll move
6 the next list of ten speakers.

7 We have at this time -- first I'll read the
8 speakers who do appear to be present and then I'll
9 read those who are not: So wait -- Miles -- wait,
10 excuse me just one moment.

11 Bruna Lora;

12 Elizabeth K. Vanderbilt;

13 Charles Roth;

14 And Leeann Latsch.

15 Excuse me. Before we go into this next
16 group, I believe we have Robert Brenner who is
17 speaking on behalf of Johanna Climenko, who was a
18 registered speaker a few minutes ago.

19 So Robert Brenner or Brinner.

20 MR. BRENNER: Brenner.

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Brenner.

22 MR. BRENNER: Okay. Let's start my video,
23 let's see. Okay. Hear my voice. See me I think?

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

25 MR. BRENNER: Sorry for the switcheroo. I'm

2 just Zooming in to voice my opposition to the current
3 plan to redevelop Penn Station. Nobody doubts Penn
4 Station needs be redeveloped, this is the wrong plan
5 at the wrong time. The current plan has two major
6 flaws:

7 First, it depends on financing the
8 redevelopment of the Penn Station by demolishing the
9 surrounding historic buildings and replacing them
10 with office towers. There was already a glut of
11 office space in New York City before the pandemic.
12 Many white-collar workers who are currently
13 telecommuting will not be coming back even after the
14 pandemic subsides. It does not make sense to build
15 more office space that will wind up standing empty.
16 New York City doesn't need another Hudson Yards.

17 Second, the current plan will destroy
18 hundreds of existing small businesses in the area who
19 employees thousands of workers and serves thousands
20 of customers. These small businesses have been
21 barely hanging on during the pandemic and need
22 financial support, not eviction notices.

23 It takes years to build up the clientele for
24 a small business. Most of these small businesses
25 will not survive relocation or simply cease to exist.

2 And contrary to what the -- what the current
3 redevelopment plans smugly states, they will not just
4 be replaced by other "similar small businesses."

5 Small businesses are inherently unique. They
6 are not replaceable. New York City deserves a better
7 redevelopment plan for Penn Station that focuses on
8 creative reuse of existing of the historic buildings
9 and preserving existing small businesses, not a
10 Hudson Yards 2.

11 I urge you to completely scrap the current
12 redevelopment plan instead of tinkering with it and
13 come up with a new plan that benefits all New
14 Yorkers, not just Vornado Realty.

15 That's all I have to say.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 We'll now go to our next list of speakers --
19 registered speakers who are present includes:

20 Bruno Lora;
21 Elizabeth K. Vanderbilt;
22 Charles Roth;
23 Leeann Latsch.

24 Based on this list, it appears as though the
25 following names are not currently present:

2 Fg Fg;

3 John Jurayj;

4 David Calligeros;

5 Everald Nedrick;

6 And Imran Ansari.

7 If any of those names are actually present
8 and want to speak, please email
9 help@publicworkspartners.com

10 So we will go to Bruno Lora. You may let us
11 know when you're ready to begin.

12 (No response.)

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Bruno Lora.

14 (No response.)

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay. We'll move to
16 Elizabeth K. Vanderbilt.

17 MS. VANDERBILT: Okay.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ms. Elizbaeth K.
19 Vanderbilt. You may begin when you're ready.

20 MS. VANDERBILT: Okay. My name is Elizabeth
21 Vanderbilt, I have lived in Chelsea for almost 50
22 years.

23 And I object very strongly to the current
24 plan for the redevelopment of the Penn Station area.
25 Penn Station certainly needs to be improved and we

2 must find a way to transform it into a modern
3 serviceable transportation hub, possibly by making it
4 a through station as mentioned by other comments.

5 Long Island Railroad needs to be expanded,
6 train service to New Jersey needs improvement.
7 Transportation through the busy northeast corridor is
8 important. Certainly the current Penn Station and
9 Madison Square Garden, which were raised on the
10 corpse of the beautiful and architecturally important
11 building, they're an eyesore. And it doesn't work
12 right. It's not good for a transportation hub, it
13 can be expanded and made.

14 However, it can be expanded and made more
15 functional on its current footprint. The proposed
16 plan under discussion tonight is a grave misuse of
17 public funds. We do not need more skyscrapers
18 blocking the light. We're already awash in office
19 space and we need no more luxury housing.

20 The plan presented will destroy old
21 buildings, displace hundreds of residents and
22 businesses and destroy buildings of historic
23 importance and a thriving community.

24 I direct your attention to the Hudson Yards,
25 where public moneys have funded the development that

2 is completely unsustainable, it's half vacant, it's
3 losing retail tenants and it seems to simply be a
4 means for private developers to consume public money
5 at the expense of the community. All too many
6 public/private partnerships profit only the
7 stockholders in the private sphere at the expense of
8 the public.

9 The only people -- almost the only people on
10 the call tonight who have spoken in favor of this
11 project are people who work in the construction
12 industry or who have other financial interests in
13 working on this project and construction of the
14 project that's actually necessary. That is a
15 well-planned transportation hub above or below ground
16 and the preservation and renovation of buildings in
17 the surrounding community as needed will provide
18 plenty of good union jobs to union workers in the
19 building trades. The designers and city planners and
20 others can all participate in the effort to develop a
21 way to accomplish this without destroying so much of
22 the community.

23 The attempt to present the area or the area
24 surrounding Penn Station as blighted seems to be a
25 cynical attempt to justify the unjustifiable razing

2 of a living community. The destruction of the Hotel
3 Pennsylvania is already underway and it's completely
4 ignored the possibility of the renovating the
5 building that Vornado itself allowed to fall into
6 disrepair over its 25 years of ownership. This
7 developer never intended to use this historically
8 important building for anything but the land
9 underneath and it now hopes to reap the benefits of
10 its years of indifference on our dime.

11 I strongly object to the development plan
12 presented tonight which will adversely effect the
13 community for years come. It is --

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

15 MS. VANDERBILT: -- possible to develop a
16 state of the art transportation hub which is most
17 certainly needed without destroying communities and
18 casting shadows over others without adding ten
19 unnecessary office towers and without lining the
20 pockets of a private developer at the expense of the
21 public good. I urge you to --

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
23 for your testimony, if you would like to submit
24 additional testimony, please feel free to do that in
25 writing.

2 Our next speaker will be Charles Roth.

3 Charles Roth. Yes, I see you.

4 MR. ROTH: Hello. Yes. Can you see me, can
5 you hear me?

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
7 you.

8 MR. ROTH: Okay. Hi. How are you?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good.

10 MR. ROTH: All right. My name is Charles
11 Roth. I'm a professional musician here in New York
12 City. I've lived here since 1976 and went pro in
13 1977. I'm sorry I'm a little unkept, I was actually
14 fresh shaven when this meeting started.

15 But I would like to just state my opposition
16 to this project as it stands. Over these many years
17 of working as a professional musician here, I've seen
18 the music community in its various locations in
19 Manhattan just get squeezed out, squeezed out.

20 A lot of this is just the way the economy in
21 the city runs. Artists tend to go into places where
22 it's cheap, possibly a little dodgy, things are made
23 better. The developers come in based on all the hard
24 work the artists did with all of their money, pay off
25 the politicians and stuff gets done.

2 I'm also seeing, you know, if you're in New
3 York for more than seven years, you see your fair
4 share of landgrabs by greedy developers. This one is
5 really -- like I've been here for 50 years but this
6 is unbelievable. The way -- you know, they -- they
7 put this noble thing, they're going to fix Penn
8 Station and then they're going to knock down all
9 these other buildings because they gotta go because
10 that's the blight.

11 And the meantime on 30th Street, you have
12 rehearsal studios, even though those greedy guys have
13 squeezed out a lot of these businesses. You still
14 have a lot of rehearsal studios there. You have
15 retailers there, you have recording studios there.

16 And I don't want people to think that I'm
17 just advocating on the behalf of a bunch of broken
18 down rock and rollers or whatever. The circles of
19 the New York music community spread far and wide.
20 They go from punk rock to hip hop to classical to
21 jazz to Latin, you name it, everybody is connected
22 with this and all those communities use the service
23 of 30th Street.

24 I'm very opposed -- I'm for fixing Penn
25 Station. I respect the interest of the people that

2 are for this, especially in the construction trade.
3 I totally understand where you guys are coming from.
4 But people are not going into these buildings, this
5 is the 1980s idea of a construction plan, build more
6 offices. Convert the beautiful buildings you have in
7 this neighborhood.

8 Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Our next -- we'll move now to our next list
12 of ten speakers. I'll read first the names of
13 speakers who are -- who are -- who we know are
14 present:

15 John Brattin;

16 John Cameron;

17 Denice Whitbek;

18 Tom Shad;

19 And Richard Speruggia.

20 Other names appear as though those speakers
21 are not present:

22 Christian Hilling;

23 Kim Townsend;

24 Vincent Mongeluzo;

25 Lorraine Diehl;

2 Beth Sopko.

3 If you are on that second list, please email
4 help@publicworkspartners.com to let us know how to
5 identify you.

6 And so with that, we will start with John
7 Brattin.

8 John Brattin, you can let us know when you're
9 ready. I see you. And now I can hear you.

10 MR. BRATTIN: Hello. I'm going to be very
11 brief. I am absolutely opposed to this plan as it
12 stands and I really do think they need to go back to
13 the drawing board. The idea that demolishing New
14 York is a way to rebuild it is just silly business
15 and Penn Station is the problem.

16 By displacing citizens who have been there
17 for so many years and communities like I've heard
18 about, which I remember but haven't visited in years
19 such as the music row. This is just despicable. And
20 to lose what's left of the architects who built the
21 original Penn Station in that vicinity, doesn't
22 really seem to have much to do with the history of
23 rail. I thought like the use of the Moynihan thing
24 was great.

25 But what about that hotel? I mean, it's

2 probably half gone. And I think it's really crazy
3 that we haven't had an opportunity to oppose this
4 until now.

5 That's this -- the historic loss of the
6 Gimbel's traverse, the sky bridge and the Stewart
7 Hotel also really stings. And I think people will
8 regret this for years down the line and ask our
9 generation why did you knock these things down?
10 That's it.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Our next speaker who is registered and
14 present in the Zoom is Denice Whitbeck. It's
15 possible that Denice is -- Denice Whitbeck is not
16 present currently. And Tom Shad also not present.
17 If either of these speakers is present please email
18 the "help@" email address.

19 So we'll move to Richard Sperrugia. Richard
20 Sperrugia also may no longer be with us. Hopefully
21 they are submitting their testimony in writing.

22 So we will move to our next list of speakers.

23 And first I'll read those who I believe are
24 here. Give me just one moment:

25 Richard Cameron;

2 Amanda Yaggy;
3 John Jovick;
4 And Charles Levine.

5 Based on that list it appears the rest of the
6 names are not present:

7 Peter Samton;
8 Susan Cole;
9 Simon Kirke;
10 George Combos;
11 Amy Chin;
12 And Kaitlyn Moore.

13 If you are on that second group, please email
14 "help@" to let us know how to identify you.

15 And we will begin with the first speaker who
16 is present, Richard Cameron.

17 Hi, we can see you and hear you.

18 MR. CAMERON: Hi. Thank you. Hi. My name
19 is -- thank you for allowing me to give testimony
20 this evening. My name is Richard Cameron, I'm the
21 principle of the design firm Atelier & Company and
22 I'm a board member of the advocacy group Rethink N1C.

23 My firm, Atelier & Company was hired by
24 Vornado Realty Trust in 2014 to work with the hotel
25 developer, Arcade Capital, to carry out a study on

2 the viability of refurbishing and adapting the
3 historic Hotel Pennsylvania into a series of
4 interconnected smaller hotels and longterm residences
5 within the historic building.

6 And we demonstrated that this important and
7 beautiful hotel, which is a crucial surviving piece
8 of the original Pennsylvania Station master plan can
9 be viably and economically adapted and preserved.

10 The current project by the ESDC Penn Station
11 District which is in effect working on behalf of
12 Vornado Realty Trust is deeply flawed. Every element
13 of the plan is demonstrably wrong. From the transit
14 analysis which ignores the clear solution of through
15 running at Penn Station as is used in London, Paris,
16 Philadelphia and Tokyo for instance to the demolition
17 of important historic buildings all of which were
18 acknowledged by the ESDC's own study as being worthy
19 of consideration for landmark designation.

20 To the flawed energy analysis of demolition
21 versus new construction and the awful economic model
22 of more unneeded Class A office space.

23 Everyone who has spoken in favor of the
24 ESDC's plan is either ignorant or the alternative,
25 such as those presented on our websites,

2 ReThinkNYC.org and ReThinkPennStationNYC.org. Or
3 they're acting in collusion with the real estate
4 developers in supporting the privatization of this
5 part of New York City.

6 Please visit our websites to see these
7 alternative plans and to read a detailed critique of
8 the ESDC's Penn District plan.

9 Penn Station will never be a proper arrival
10 into New York and a functioning major transit hub
11 until Madison Square Garden is moved and the station
12 is fully above ground again.

13 The original design of Penn Station, the post
14 office, now Moynihan Train Hall and the Hotel
15 Pennsylvania were part the holistic urban plan for
16 New York City.

17 The Landmarks Preservation laws that the city
18 enacted were a direct result of the demolition of
19 Penn Station. The ESDC and Vornado's proposal to
20 demolish the remaining historic buildings in the
21 neighborhood is to double down on the worst mistake
22 in the history of New York, the demolition of the
23 original station which was the grandest train station
24 in the world.

25 There are far better alternatives that

2 include through running at Penn, rebuilding the
3 original station. Something which has been done with
4 countless major historic buildings around the world
5 like the City of Dresden, to name only one.
6 Preserving and adaptively reusing the Hotel
7 Pennsylvania and maintaining the residential
8 neighborhood here and protecting the 2,500 residents
9 or more who will be displaced if this awful project
10 proceeds as proposed.

11 Thank you for letting me speak this evening.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Our next speaker will be Amanda Yaggy.

15 MS. YAGGY: Hi. Can you hear me?

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can. You can
17 start when you're ready.

18 MS. YAGGY: Okay. As a resident of
19 Manhattan, like I think every other resident of
20 Manhattan that's spoken this evening, I oppose this
21 project as it is. But agree that Penn Station is in
22 dire need of improvement.

23 This plan, however, is not about that. This
24 plan is about colonizing this part of New York on
25 behalf of real estate monopolist, Vornado. They own

2 2.6 million square feet of commercial retail space in
3 Manhattan alone. Which helps explain how asking
4 retail rents still average of \$615 a square foot,
5 even if we have vacancy blights all over our major
6 retail.

7 In September, Governor Hochul appeared at New
8 York City Fashion Week and told Vogue Magazine how
9 important the survival is of the fashion industry is
10 to New York, emphasizing that it employs 6 percent of
11 all New Yorkers and is a primary driver of economic
12 tourism.

13 New York's preeminence as a fashion center
14 had waned even before the pandemic, however, due to
15 exorbitant rents and the pressures of globalization.
16 And if the governor is serious about helping the
17 industry recover, she could reconsider the
18 demolition, potential demolition of so much of New
19 York's foundational fashion history included in this
20 plan.

21 According to the pro-developer lobby, ultra
22 buildings will naturally filter downwards and become
23 affordable and available for adaptive reuse. If that
24 were actually promoted and possible in this area,
25 maybe we could see artists and designers in live/work

2 spaces or small smart-up businesses or use
3 sustainable fashion businesses or per Senator
4 Biaggi's new bill.

5 Alternatively, if Albany allows full
6 demolition of so many historic registered structures,
7 completely evading oversight then maybe the developer
8 lobby is right and LPC has outlived its usefulness
9 all together.

10 Maybe we should do away with landmarks
11 preservation entirely since it stands in the way of
12 profit making for Vornado. It would be poetic to
13 abolish LPC and landmarks preservation just in time
14 to raze what's left of the old Penn Station area.
15 Thanks.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 And our next speaker will be John Jovick.
19 John Jovick.

20 MR. JOVICK: Can you hear me now?

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can.

22 MR. JOVICK: Good evening, everyone. My name
23 is John Jovick, I'm the business manager of Heat &
24 Frost Insulators Local 12.

25 I believe that this project would be an

2 economic boost to the area. Improving Penn Station
3 has long been overdue. The additional tracks would
4 also encourage more people to utilize mass transit.

5 We all say that Manhattan has too much
6 traffic. Improving mass transit is definitely the
7 way to address this problem.

8 Clean air is a priority for all of us and I
9 do believe that this is a great step in the right
10 direction.

11 This project should be part of a Project
12 Labor Agreement. This would ensure that the work is
13 performed by well-trained tradespeople. The project
14 would create opportunities and great jobs. Actually
15 good middle class jobs where men and women can earn a
16 fair wage and support a family, and I'm totally in
17 support of this project. And I thank everyone for
18 listening.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 So at this point we will move to our next set
22 of ten speakers. Hold on one moment. Just making
23 sure I'm lined up with the right list. Yes. Okay.

24 Our next set of speakers who are present on
25 the Zoom are:

2 James Ruciello;
3 Craig Slutskin;
4 Susie Schrop;
5 Vivian Tiviling;
6 Michael Reed;
7 Arno Hecht.

8 And of the group on this -- of the registered
9 speakers on this list, it's our understanding that
10 Beatrice Rodriguez, Nora North, Anne White and
11 Patrick Short are not present.

12 If you are present or a representative for
13 one of those folks is present, please email the
14 "help@" email address.

15 So we'll go to our first speaker, James
16 Ruciello.

17 We can see and hear you.

18 MR. RUCIELLO: Hi. Thank you. It's great to
19 speak and thank you for allowing public testimony on
20 this. My name is James Ruciello, I'm a Manhattan
21 resident and I am preservation advocate and I'd like
22 to add my voice against this proposition.

23 We're angered when developers seize our
24 commonly shared light, air, gardens and iconic
25 consumption. We're aggrieved when we see developers

2 plunder our historic neighborhoods and bury them in a
3 sea of glass for all for luxury housing that destroys
4 the more affordable apartments that they create. And
5 we're dismayed that the small businesses are being
6 hounded out of their premises by an army of banks and
7 chain stores.

8 Many parts of our city are already too dense,
9 such that the public infrastructure in these places
10 cannot support people without any decline -- without
11 decline in the quality of life, without the
12 destruction of the historic fabric and the
13 deterioration of the urban experience that makes New
14 York so great.

15 Economic growth and affordable housing are
16 indisputably compatible with both human skills and
17 the preservation of our historic neighborhoods and
18 architecture. So we conclude that the reform must
19 take place or the unique character of New York City
20 will be lost forever.

21 This is part of a testimony from several
22 groups, including the Victorian Society of New York.
23 Thank you again for the chance to speak on this
24 behalf and I realize you have a number of
25 participants waiting to talk. So hopefully this will

2 be over relatively soon.

3 Thank you very much and have a good night.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
5 testimony and for your patience.

6 Our next speaker will be Craig Slutskin.

7 MR. SLUTSKIN: Hi, can you hear me?

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes.

9 MR. SLUTSKIN: Okay. Thank you. Good
10 evening, almost morning. My name is Craig Slutskin
11 and I'm an officer of Community Board 5. I'm not
12 sure why the Community Board representative wasn't
13 recognized earlier.

14 But that being said, thank you for the
15 opportunity to provide comments tonight. Community
16 Board 5 expressed their opposition on December 8th,
17 2021 at a hearing organized by ESD, as well as in a
18 myriad of resolutions. We're going to continue to
19 voice our opposition and our concerns.

20 The GPP was announced in January 2020 and in
21 the course of those two years, we've expressed our
22 grave concerns for a plan that would cause the
23 demolition of nine, nine city blocks. It would use
24 the devastating urban renewal methods of the 1960s
25 and would displace hundreds of residents.

2 As we've testified before, the plan would
3 destroy our neighborhood and it would ruin the lives
4 of hundreds of our residents and business owners who
5 would lose their homes or their livelihood. It would
6 override city zoning laws to replace them with
7 harmful new ones and would cost taxpayers millions of
8 dollars in subsidies.

9 What this plan would not do is actually the
10 only thing that's desperately needed: It would not
11 address Penn Station. The plan deliberately excludes
12 Penn Station. This is not a plan to reconstruct Penn
13 Station, this is not a plan to expand Penn Station
14 capacity. We've wasted two years talking about ten
15 towers while entirely ignoring the only area that
16 matters, Penn Station.

17 While ESD continues to persist in its
18 exercise in futility, the state is not developing a
19 plan to upgrade Penn Station. It's not engaging with
20 the stakeholders on how to increase capacity. It's
21 not creating a collaborative framework to address the
22 acute transportation needs of the Northeast Corridor.
23 It's not putting the finishing touches to its grant
24 applications to the federal government.

25 The proposal has garnered tremendous

2 opposition from a wide range of individuals and
3 organizations. We've seen it tonight.
4 Transportation groups, urban planning groups, good
5 government groups, historic preservation groups,
6 hundreds of residents all have expressed their strong
7 opposition to this plan. It would be tone death not
8 to hear the loud clammer in unison against this
9 project.

10 We call upon Hope Knight, the president of
11 ESD as well as the Governor, Governor Hochul to
12 withdraw this ill-conceived plan.

13 Thank you for this opportunity to testify and
14 have a good night. I appreciate your time.

15 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 Our next speaker will Susie Schrop.

18 Susie Schrop, you may unmute and let us know
19 when you're ready to start. Yep, we see you. And
20 you should be unmuted as well.

21 MS. SCHROP: Okay. Great. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to speak and thank you for sticking here.

23 I'm here to speak against the abominable Penn
24 Station redevelopment as it currently stands. I have
25 lived in New York City for over 30 years. Before

2 COVID I had an office on 30th and Seventh Avenue for
3 more than 11 years. I did business at the main post
4 office, attended conferences at the iconic
5 Pennsylvania Hotel and took time out to eat lunch in
6 the serene St. John the Baptist garden.

7 This city is suffering from the cancer of the
8 continued destruction of its historical treasures and
9 a baffling disregard for anything historic.
10 Developers also like to divide the public by
11 presenting the polarity of ever -- of an everything
12 or nothing proposal when we have so many better
13 options on the table. These better options yield
14 fewer profits to developers but so many actual
15 benefits to the public.

16 The proposal also dangles a limp carrot of a
17 token in front of the -- token affordable housing
18 that doesn't even replace the affordable housing
19 units eliminated as part of this proposal. And the
20 newly-created housing will not be affordable to low
21 and moderate income people as we've seen in other
22 projects.

23 Testimonial -- again this ill-conceived plan
24 of overwhelming, yet our government agencies and the
25 politicians keep failing the public in this "economic

2 development". The burden on taxpayers in this
3 pandemic and post-pandemic world is reckless. People
4 don't dispute responsible development, but they're
5 sick and tired and disgusted by the repeated
6 pillaging of public lands and interests.

7 The proposal lacks any kind of sensible
8 diverse urban planning, they're only focused on the
9 maximum possible profits of developers. There are
10 many much better options here and we've heard them
11 but only the most predatory proposals are being
12 considered.

13 I'm a proud union member. And the unions
14 will support better-suited plans since there will
15 still be massive construction projects.

16 Yes, improve Penn Station but kill the
17 Vornado landgrab. Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Our next speaker will be Vivian Tivilling.

21 Hi. We can see you and now you're unmuted.

22 MALE SPEAKER: Okay, I'm not Vivian
23 obviously. She's an early to bed kind of person.
24 She asked me to stay on because she really wanted to
25 talk to you and so thank you for the opportunity.

2 You know I've spoken here before, I've been to many
3 of these meetings from the -- I think the first one I
4 found out about fifteen minutes before it started
5 back in -- I don't know when it was, but some months
6 ago.

7 And I've made mention of the fact that the --
8 the report that says that we're blighted is so
9 blatantly wrong. So there's a great deal of thought
10 that's going on here and it surprises me this is not
11 a direct attack to you or anybody else indeed, it
12 would only take a half an hour to take that review
13 and walk around the area and see how many horrible
14 misrepresentations there are.

15 For example, the first one I saw was when
16 they showed a picture of the front of the building
17 here and they say the picture was taken in 2020. But
18 meanwhile, it's highly recognizable as having been
19 taken some 20 years, 30 years, 40 years ago because
20 the building in 2016 began -- the owner began a
21 renovation that completely dramatically changed the
22 front of the building, it's all brand new now. But
23 they didn't show that.

24 And when I made point of that, lo and behold
25 in the next publication of the report, they instead

2 focused in on an area of the building that was
3 involved in a terrible accident three years ago that
4 was fixed a long time ago, saying that that's the new
5 picture. And meanwhile it's, you know, that's first
6 off.

7 Second off, even yourself you made mention of
8 the part of the plan is to build a tunnel that
9 goes -- a pedestrian tunnel that goes from Sixth
10 Avenue to Eighth Avenue. I've lived in this
11 neighborhood -- by the way, Vivian and I got married
12 in 1982 and so it will be our 40th this year and
13 yadda, yadda.

14 Anyway, I've been living in the neighborhood
15 for 50 years and starting in the mid-70s, I
16 discovered the tunnel that they're going to build.
17 It's very surprising that it should be have been
18 occurring in 1970s and suddenly we're going to have
19 to build a tunnel.

20 In fact, I've used that tunnel hundreds of
21 times over the years. It actually goes from 32nd
22 Street and Broadway and it goes all the way up to
23 38th Street and Eighth Avenue, 36th Street or 38th
24 Street and Eighth Avenue. And I used that many times
25 because there was a period of time that -- that it

2 was just was very convenient because I was working
3 there, blah, blah, blah.

4 And lo and behold, that tunnel that -- the
5 pedestrian tunnel that goes underground which is
6 fantastic, especially in the tough winter, or even
7 just in rain, that tunnel was closed just at the same
8 time as Vornado bought the Penn Hotel and --

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

10 MALE SPEAKER: So yeah -- so the
11 misrepresentations here are absolutely criminal and
12 they should not be rewarded for being criminals.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Our next speaker will be Arno Hecht.

16 MR. HECHT: Can you hear me?

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes, we can see you and
18 hear you. You can start when you're ready.

19 MR. HECHT: I'm ready. Go ahead. I don't
20 see me but...

21 THE HEARING OFFICER: No, we can see you so
22 you can start --

23 MR. HECHT: You can see me. Okay. I'm a
24 lifelong resident of New York City. I'm a
25 professional musician, I've played with everybody

2 from the Rolling Stones to Ray Charles, to Joan Jett,
3 to James Brown, the list goes on and on. I'm on over
4 350 albums.

5 For years I've watched with dismay and
6 disgust as boondoggles like this have driven out
7 recording studios, rehearsal studios, music stores,
8 and nightclubs that the music industry in New York
9 has been decimated. It's a fraction of what it used
10 to be. And people have -- you know, I'm also a union
11 member. A member of -- a long time union member of
12 the American Federation of Musicians, local 802.

13 I've got some -- people talk about jobs, well
14 I'd like to read some statistics:

15 According to the office of the New York State
16 Comptroller, in 2019 128,400 New York City residents
17 drew their primary source of income from the arts and
18 entertainment industry.

19 Thanks to the pandemic as a consequence of
20 what we've had to go through with COVID thing, as of
21 December 2020, the arts and entertainment employment
22 declined by 66 percent, the largest decline among the
23 city's economic sectors.

24 Nationally, the unemployment rate is down to
25 4.2 percent. New York City it's more than double

2 that, 9.4 percent. And you know what, this project
3 what it's going to do to 30th Street, it's going to
4 eliminate recording studios, music stores and
5 rehearsal studios and it will be another stake
6 through the heart of the music industry.

7 You know what, \$70 billion in economic
8 activity declined in 2020 to \$23 million. Those
9 people, they ain't coming to watch construction
10 sites, they're coming to be entertained. And you
11 know what, you're going to destroy the entertainment
12 industry even more than you've already done.

13 I'm on over 350 albums, I do a lot of studio
14 work. More and more when I get called to play on
15 somebody's record, it's in a studio in New Jersey, in
16 Connecticut, in upstate New York, I just did one in
17 Woodstock. Because the Record Plant is gone, the Hit
18 Factory is gone, one studio after another. There
19 used to be a music district on 48th Street, there
20 were ten music stores. All gone for projects like
21 this.

22 And so boondoggles like this will just
23 destroy --

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

25 MR. HECHT: Will just destroy the music

2 industry even. Thank you for listening.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 I believe that's our last speaker out of this
6 set of ten registered speakers.

7 And just point to out to our technical team
8 that we have one of our ASL interpreter who is
9 rejoining.

10 And so we will move to our next set of ten
11 speakers. And I will say again as I (indecipherable)
12 thank you all for your patience.

13 So out of this list, I will first read the
14 folks who we believe are present:

15 Matt Feinberg;

16 Abram Morris;

17 Christopher Layden;

18 Katherine -- no, not Katherine O'Sullivan.

19 Sorry, Katherine O'Sullivan will be the first person
20 on the next list.

21 And so Matt Feinberg;

22 Abram Morris;

23 Christopher Layden.

24 And then out of this list it appears that the
25 following speakers are not present. If you are

2 present, please email the "help@" email address to
3 let us know:

4 Bonnie Webber;

5 Benjamin Moore;

6 David Wong;

7 Sean Jeansgal or Johnsgal;

8 John Cameron;

9 David Goldman;

10 Karen Dodd.

11 So if you're on that second list, please
12 email us to let us know how to identify you.

13 So our first speaker, our first registered
14 speaker to speak on this list is Matt Feinberg.

15 (No response.)

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Matt Feinberg. Please
17 let us know when you're ready to begin.

18 (No response)

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: And we will move on to
20 Abram Morris.

21 MR. MORRIS: Hello. Can you hear me okay?

22 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see you and hear
23 you, Abram. But you've muted, you're unmuted again.
24 So try unmuting more time.

25 MR. MORRIS: Okay.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good. Yup, you're
3 good. Go.

4 MR. MORRIS: Thank you so much so for taking
5 the time to host this. New Yorkers like myself
6 really appreciate it.

7 This is a huge project and there are so many
8 different considerations. I'm an architecture
9 student at City College here in New York City and as
10 a young architect who grew up in the city and has
11 seen so many things happen since I was born, it's
12 clear that this development plan needs some
13 rethinking.

14 And I support the fact that New York City has
15 been shaped by projects like these. I'm not saying
16 we need a stagnant city, the city is constantly
17 changing, constantly developing but in my opinion it
18 really is the people that make this city great. Not
19 the buildings and the especially not the tall glass
20 skyscrapers.

21 And all I have to say is that, you know,
22 Vornado and the state and the city should really
23 reconsider this plan.

24 And I don't know if anybody has been to
25 Madison Square Garden, but I would have happily trade

2 any concert experience I've had for a new station
3 that is above the ground.

4 And I'm sorry, but no matter what you want to
5 say about the surrounding neighborhood, that is what
6 New York is. Not tall glass skyscrapers that are
7 empty and devoid of any life. What really makes the
8 city, the city is the people that live there.

9 And this project if you were to create a
10 fantastic station that drew people in, we could bring
11 in so many more people to the city. If this is a
12 green station that completely revamped the area, you
13 wouldn't need to destroy all the existing potential
14 there and it can continue to adapt and change into a
15 new station that is specifically on the current site
16 of Madison Square Garden to be developed. There's so
17 many options, so many possibilities.

18 And I really think it would advantageous of
19 the city and the state to really overhaul the
20 station, bringing a lot more people to New York City
21 and make the whole area much more of a getaway or a
22 point or a node where we escape the city or we come
23 in to the city. It does not have to be about profit.
24 This can bring so much more revenue into the city
25 than developing just the surrounding skyscrapers, I

2 think that's a ridiculous idea.

3 I understand where it's coming from, but I
4 just (indecipherable) and I think there are so many
5 more creative ways we can revamp the city in this
6 place. So thank you so much.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you very much for
8 your testimony.

9 So we will now actually move to our next
10 list. And again, I will thank everyone for bearing
11 through this long testimony. We continue to be
12 committed to hearing everyone who has registered to
13 provide testimony this evening.

14 So on your next list, it's possible that
15 actually many folks are still here, waiting to
16 provide testimony. So I'll read the entire list and
17 then the names who are not present currently:

18 Katherine O'Sullivan;

19 Max Scott;

20 Andrew Cronson;

21 T. Lawrence Wheatman;

22 Ann McDermott;

23 Eugene Sinigalliano;

24 Steve Marshall;

25 Edward McWilliams.

2 John Mudd;

3 And Anthony Madaio.

4 Out of this list, it appears that Max Scott
5 and Anthony Madaio are not present. If they are
6 present, please email us to let us know at
7 help@publicworkspartners.com.

8 So we will begin with Katherine O'Sullivan.

9 (No response.)

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Katherine O'Sullivan,
11 let us know when you're ready to begin.

12 (No response.)

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: For now we'll move on
14 to Andrew Cronson.

15 Andrew Cronson. Yep, we see you. You're
16 visible and now I can hear you.

17 MR. CRONSON: Good evening. And really good
18 morning actually. Before my time starts, I just want
19 to thank the stenographer and the ASL interpreters
20 for their work behind the scenes.

21 My name is Andrew Cronson, I'm with the
22 Empire Station Coalition. It was wonderful to hear
23 the resounding support the unions for fixing Penn
24 Station. However, any sort of new construction would
25 create work.

2 What is proposed now is not green and is not
3 sustainable. The alternatives like through running
4 and rehabilitation would be a superior economic
5 catalyst than just ordinary construction gigs that
6 are temporary. In fact, rehabilitation creates two
7 jobs more than the same money spent on new
8 construction.

9 Quite simply, preservation is good for the
10 economy overall and good for business in every
11 quantifiable measure. The greenest building is what
12 stands already. All this enthusiasm will fall on
13 fallow soil since this plan is irretrievably flawed
14 from the start. On first glance, it is easy to be
15 fooled by the sector of jobs, jobs and jobs and the
16 chance to make a better Penn Station.

17 But this is not about transit. There will be
18 no transformational station overhaul. Let us not get
19 wrapped up in the prevailing net for decades that all
20 forms of new construction will always offer a net
21 positive for society. Once one digs with a careful
22 eye into this plan, the EIS and the appendices you
23 will see how misguided, segmented, ineffective this
24 chosen approach is.

25 Instead of using a scalpel for the most

2 calculated efficient response, New York has been
3 using a bulldozer, both peddling a bait and switch of
4 discredit urban renewal and blatant corporate
5 welfare. They are literally mining our city for
6 profit even though we know it will leave a worse
7 world for future generations. It is borne out of a
8 short-term thinking which is almost a religion, to
9 maximize profits at all costs. This is not a road to
10 NIMBY reaction.

11 If there was a plan that precluded demolition
12 of historic buildings, avoided evictions, modernized
13 aboveground station and limited subsidies, and
14 implemented all viable alternatives, I would be the
15 first in line. But none of those are being
16 considered currently.

17 ESD and our officials are seemingly content
18 with this unprecedented collateral damage. There are
19 no apparent plans for redress other than to note
20 these dangerous signals like Peg Benny and Jane
21 Jacobs had done many decades -- many decades ago to
22 no avail. It's like yelling into a void.

23 Simply put, this proposal is wholly untenable
24 unsustainable, heartless and inherently undemocratic.
25 But no apparent end goal other than to enrich the

2 pockets of the wealthiest echelons at the expense of
3 our most vulnerable. No action should be taken at
4 this time without a complete overhaul of what is
5 being proposed and how it is funded.

6 New York City deserves nothing less than a
7 plan that puts sustainability, preservation, safety,
8 transit, human services, innovation and fiscal
9 accountability and the concern of the entire public
10 as its sole and single focus. Thank you.

11 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Okay. Our next speaker will be T. Lawrence
14 Wheatman.

15 Hi. I can see you and hear you.

16 MR. WHEATMAN: So sorry. I'm on Vivian's
17 thing here. Okay. Gotcha. Okay. So I can finish
18 my thoughts here in terms of doing the due diligence.
19 I would think that the folks who work there would be
20 able to do this, to be able to just take the half
21 hour to walk around with that and report and see how
22 accurate it is.

23 And something that nobody has mentioned here
24 is about the fact we keep calling it Penn Station
25 when, in fact, in the 1960s it was turned into Penn

2 Terminal. This is what we keep coming back to, why
3 do we only do the through running trains.

4 And somebody who doesn't know might think,
5 well, they have to bore put new holes through
6 Manhattan and that will be a big deal. Well, the
7 holes are already there. There's four tracks that go
8 to Long Island.

9 As I understand, I'm not a train person, but
10 as I understand, just doing that, just doing the
11 through running trains would increase the efficiency
12 of the station by 30 percent right away. 30 percent
13 is also approximately the number that the efficiency
14 would go up if they dug -- if they took this block.
15 I'm on 30th Street between 30th and 31st, if they
16 took this block and added those three tracks or four
17 tracks, whatever it was they were going to put
18 underneath us, underneath this land.

19 Clearly, doing something that's where it's
20 already there, the tunnels are already there just
21 like that pedestrian tunnel is already there, you
22 don't have to build that, it's already there, you
23 just have reopen it. Again, Penn Station needs help
24 for sure.

25 Something that nobody else has mentioned too,

2 I had the pleasure I guess you can call it of getting
3 to know a little bit of Mr. Dolan, Tom Dolan, is that
4 his name? Who owns Madison Square Garden. And he's
5 a couple of years older than me, that puts him into
6 the 70s and I'll be 70 on my next birthday in a
7 couple of weeks, and he's also a phenomenal musician.
8 I mean, an incredible musician. I'm sure he would
9 like to go back to music rather than be the person
10 who doesn't pay taxes and is hated by everybody
11 around him. Maybe we can just encourage that outcome
12 so we can get that back.

13 One more thing that I can remember -- I don't
14 see a block, by the way, I can remember when they
15 first started the deconstruction, they put in what
16 they call a manhole cover to be able to protect the
17 people who are still using the station. And the
18 understanding was that that manhole cover would be
19 removed when the construction was done. Nobody ever
20 mentioned that that manhole cover was going to stay
21 exactly where that was with that low ceiling which
22 indeed, I'm 6-foot-4, I can touch the ceiling in a
23 lot of different places. I don't mean that they went
24 --

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: You have ten seconds

2 left.

3 MR. WHEATMAN: I'm old enough to remember
4 what the station looked like. I remember the bus
5 station that was across the street and next to that
6 was a diner that was in a dirt parking lot. And I
7 remember the diner was -- had great atmosphere and
8 terrible --

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you, sir, for
10 your testimony. You may submit additional testimony
11 via email or mail if you would like to.

12 Our next speaker will be Ann McDermott.

13 Hi. I can see you and hear you. You can
14 start when you're ready.

15 MS. MCDERMOTT: So I represent the Empire
16 Station Coalition like many of the people who have
17 been on here. I'm just going to read our statement:

18 The negative -- the negative cost to this --
19 the negative costs to this -- the negative external
20 and social costs to this project are massive, yet are
21 wrongly portrayed as trivial in the EIS. That must
22 be rectified with professional economic analysis from
23 economists who grasp the measure of the issues.

24 Undercounted data. On the scale of the
25 residential and small business, displacement, the net

2 loss of housing and dramatic loss to small business
3 employment with at least 10,000 small business jobs
4 to be lost if the project goes forward.

5 Incorrect data on a scale and scope of
6 intended demolition of 15 historic properties of
7 national significance, many buildings of significance
8 are simply left out of the DEIS. Moreover, the DEIS
9 omits the credible economic analysis of the
10 intergenerational and musical value such properties
11 create for this the city. It also fails to explore
12 the possibility of an economic development strategy
13 based on rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

14 How is that an acceptable professional
15 practice? The DEIS portrays the immense shadow
16 impact on the public realm as trivial, even
17 irrelevant. There are no economic analysis of these
18 impacts or any discussion of the wind tunnel effects.
19 Have you ever walked down 33rd Street?

20 The documents also omit the obvious shadowing
21 and wind will negate the public realm improvements
22 Vornado claims it will make to the sidewalks and
23 streets in the immediate vicinity. The sidewalk in
24 front of Madison Square Garden was perfectly fine
25 until they started mucking with it. I work in 2 Penn

2 so I know.

3 Also ignored and uncounted is the cumulative
4 environmental impact and quality of life for
5 commuters of this project, which is -- there's going
6 to be construction for generations going on if this
7 thing goes through -- of this project. When similar
8 nearby projects in the works are taken into
9 consideration.

10 These other uncounted, unanalyzed projects
11 include the unfinished parts of Hudson Yards,
12 Manhattan West, the Hudson Square, the proposed tower
13 on top of Macy's, multiple projects in the pipeline
14 for Chelsea and the other parts of Community Board 5
15 and city proposals for the Javits Center and Port
16 Authority.

17 Finally, the ESD fails to analyze the
18 financial risk of this project to the taxpayers as
19 has been said before, they will issue bonds based on
20 numbers that Vornado is going to pull out of the air.
21 Okay. Can somebody say financial crisis of the '70s.
22 And for the city to drop dead, do we really want to
23 live through that for the sake of Larry Roth's ego?
24 I don't think so.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten more seconds.

2 MS. MCDERMOTT: I'm done. Thanks.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Our next speaker will be Eugene Sinigalliano.

6 MR. SINIGALLIANO: Can you see and hear me?

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can. You may
8 start when you're ready.

9 MR. SINIGALLIANO: Okay. My name is Eugene
10 Sinigalliano and I'm an at-risk rent stabilized
11 senior who lives at with my family at [REDACTED]
12 [REDACTED].

13 My testimony today will focus on how Empire
14 State Development is still using their completely
15 outdated, inaccurate and therefore false and
16 deceptive neighborhood conditions study to portray
17 our at-risk buildings and Site 1, 2 and 3 to be in
18 disrepair and poor condition to help justify why they
19 should be torn down.

20 The study uses old, outdated and cherry-picked
21 photos to characterize buildings as dilapidated and
22 the neighborhood as blighted. This is totally false
23 and my building and many others have undergone
24 multi-million dollar renovations just over the past
25 few years.

2 One example is my building, [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED]. Which sold in 2016 for a reported
4 \$50 million. Since that time and still underway, the
5 owners have spent several million dollars more to
6 renovate and modernize [REDACTED] into a high-tech office
7 building. This is easily proven by a current
8 inspection or just looking at the very large amount
9 of New York City Department of Buildings permits for
10 [REDACTED] from 4/2016 to present.

11 In fact, ESD's neighborhood conditions study
12 even uses pictures from many years ago, which is
13 unacceptable and deceptive for a study that is dated
14 February 2021. These pictures were taken while the
15 building was in the middle of a massive multi-million
16 dollar modernization, and they do not reflect the
17 condition at all.

18 I have already documented this in the record
19 at the Empire State Development Community Advisory
20 Committee working group meeting and emailed
21 documentation of this to many of our elected
22 officials, including detailed photo documentations. I
23 have already demanded that Empire State Development
24 be required to correct their study to present
25 accurate and honest conditions of my building and

2 others on Sites 1, 2 and 3, but to date they have not
3 done this.

4 Our buildings are not in poor condition and
5 our neighborhood is not blighted. But landlords of
6 these at-risk buildings in the southern expansion are
7 already finding that ESD's fractured and segmented
8 proposal has made leasing their available spaces very
9 difficult now.

10 ESD's GPP has no actual authority over
11 approval of the southern expansion because this must
12 be done by a NEPA process which will take about two
13 years. But because ESD included the southern
14 expansion as our highly preferred alternative in
15 their GPP, including the use of eminent domain, much
16 of the public already believes these blocks will be
17 destroyed.

18 It is well-known that this has caused
19 potential commercial clients who wanted longterm
20 options to drop any consideration of leasing in these
21 at-risk buildings. This is especially true for
22 potential clients who must --

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

24 MR. SINIGALLIANO: -- invest in major
25 leaseholder improvements.

2 ESD is now causing major losses to these
3 buildings' owners because of their fractured and
4 segmented plan --

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you
6 for your testimony. You may submit additional
7 testimony in writing via email or mail.

8 Our next speaker will be Steve Marshall.

9 MALE SPEAKER: You're on.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Steve Marshall.

11 MR. MARSHALL: Yes.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see and hear
13 you. You may begin when you're ready.

14 MR. MARSHALL: Thank you. My name is Steve
15 Marshall, I live at [REDACTED] for 45
16 years. When I moved in here, I was the assistant
17 superintendent of the building. I needed a place to
18 live and I got a job and I can play music here.

19 There was 100 studios on this block over the
20 years. It's one of the biggest music streets in New
21 York City, every musician has rehearsed here,
22 hundreds of them here in my place where I now really
23 concentrate on working with disabled musicians and
24 bands that are playing benefits and bands that I play
25 with or they play with my band. But there's no money

2 in it for hardly anyone expect a couple of my rock
3 star friends.

4 And you know, now they're trying to kick us
5 out of our homes. We already have the worst landlord
6 in New York, we've got a good lawyer, we have
7 harassment charges against them for doing what the
8 landlord -- what I think Vornado is doing to Penn
9 Station, destroying it on purpose to make people
10 complain. All the people complaining about the
11 plastic and sheetrock, it wasn't there a few years
12 ago. So he's doing a terrible job and they're going
13 to give him \$10 million to knock our block down.

14 And yeah, I sound a little skicked out, it's
15 because they made me a little crazy because I can't
16 sleep from this. All my friends' lives are going to
17 be destroyed. Hundreds of people I know on this
18 block filled with music stores, studios and artists
19 who have lived here for 45, 50 years and great art
20 deco buildings that were empty in 1975.

21 When I moved in Tommy Ramone lived
22 downstairs. Okay. I did sound for the Ramones, I
23 played with a few people. I've had a broken neck, I
24 got a son that's disabled. Okay. I played for some
25 famous people here and there. You know. I never

2 made it big.

3 But you know, I'm here, I'm here and you're
4 trying to throw me out of my home and my friends and
5 my blind friends. And I don't know. I worked for
6 Bette Midler and Diane Keaton and Mick Jagger, I wish
7 they would hear about this. My friend Simon Kirke
8 was on tonight. Arno Hecht from the Rolling Stones.
9 Simon couldn't take it after six hours. So many of
10 my friends were worn down and didn't get to speak.

11 Rob Stoner practices here and and has done
12 benefits with us. Tommy Price from Joan Jett, Tommy
13 Price from Joan Jett plays benefits, Bikers Against
14 Breast Cancer with us every year at Harley Davidson
15 of New York for 20 years.

16 That's the kind of people we bring and we
17 do -- all we do is play benefits and help people.
18 And you're trying to destroy your lives and our music
19 and our studios and you're killing us. Okay. Okay.
20 What do you want to do to us? Throw us out -- why do
21 you think the homeless people are crazy, you think
22 people like you didn't do this to them? Who are you
23 people? What's wrong with you? Get out of my life.
24 Thank you.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your

2 testimony.

3 Our next speaker will be Edward McWilliams.

4 (No response.)

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Edward McWilliams.

6 (No response.)

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: We will move to our
8 next speaker, John Mudd.

9 Hi John, we can see you. Now you can just
10 unmute and we'll be able to hear you as well. There
11 you go. Now we can see you as well.

12 MR. MUDD: Okay. Good. Thanks. Thanks so
13 much. Anyway, my name is John Mudd, I'm with the
14 Midtown South Community Council. We've been here for
15 36 years. We work on homeless and housing and social
16 issues.

17 Now, the two recent developments, starting in
18 midtown with the hotel boom that squashed enormous
19 amounts of affordable housing and Hudson Yards that
20 cost the public 2.2 billion, gives us a peek into our
21 future if Vornado is allowed to build their
22 river-to-river business district.

23 New York City development policies are
24 driving the homeless and housing crisis. A medium
25 wage earner; cops, teachers, et cetera cannot afford

2 to live here. Too many people are cost burdened.

3 I mean, we've got -- before COVID struck we
4 had 47.5 of all renter households were already rental
5 cost burdened. We've got 25 percent of all renter
6 households were spending over 50 percent of their
7 income on rent. We have 92,000 people, give or take,
8 without housing. 58,000 homeless people which
9 includes the 13,000 homeless families and 19,000
10 homeless children sleeping each night in a New York
11 City shelter. And an estimated 3,600 living on the
12 streets, others disbursed in emergency rooms, living
13 in cars, couch surfing and doubling up with family
14 and friends.

15 We have an inhumane social unacceptable
16 problem. Allowing the continuation of this private
17 and governing partnership project without eradicating
18 homelessness and creating housing stability furthers
19 an inhumane economic system.

20 We're a traumatized nation. We're held
21 hostage by an economic system that fails to deliver
22 the basic human principles; healthcare, education
23 economic opportunities, justice system and housing
24 that gives a person basic dignity.

25 Now, if you offer up the real estate of New

2 York City for wealth extracting purposes with various
3 manipulative financial finaglings, including the 421A
4 tax credit which then teases with an absurd
5 demoralizing and insulting offer of 134 so-called
6 affordable units, a scam unto itself. You are
7 abetting the continuation of those inhumane
8 practices.

9 If you are the -- with 40 million as a
10 preliminary budget and partial, mind you, of the
11 whole construction scheme to extract wealth, which
12 you know is going to grow exponentially, cannot come
13 up with a formula to balance our communities and put
14 people in housing with comfort, allowing them to rise
15 out of frustration for being cost burdened. Then you
16 are part of this cruel system that will further the
17 crumbling of our society.

18 And packing the hearing with a group of Long
19 Islander union members who do not live in the city
20 with pure focus on jobs is seen for what it is. And
21 those who spoke positively for this project should
22 understand your interests are very nearsighted.

23 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

24 MR. MUDD: You may get a windfall for a
25 shortfall, but we as a society will be impacted as

2 this wealth extraction will drive inequality to
3 extremes.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you very much for
5 your testimony.

6 At this time, we need to take a short ten
7 minute recess. It has been 90 minutes and our
8 hard-working ASL interpreters, stenographers and I
9 need a short break.

10 We -- the time is now 12:28. We will go on a
11 ten-minute break now. We will come back at 12:38.
12 We have 17 additional speakers who are registered to
13 speak. If you are still waiting, and we are
14 committed to enabling -- to giving you the
15 opportunity to speak. But please also be aware if
16 you would like to submit your testimony in written
17 format to -- via email or U.S. mail, that will be
18 given the same consideration as verbal testimony.

19 And also one final reminder, the ESD project
20 team is on -- still in the hearing and will be back
21 after the break as well.

22 And so with that, we will see you at 12:38.
23 Thank you very much.

24 (Whereupon, a short break was taken.)

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Welcome back to the

2 second public hearing for the -- excuse me. For the
3 Penn Station Redevelopment Area General Project Plan
4 Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed
5 modifications to the plan.

6 At this time we are on to a new list of
7 registered speakers and I will begin with the
8 speakers who are present:

9 Benny Landa;
10 David Hanrihan;
11 Felicia Park-Rogers;
12 Brad Vogel;
13 Samuel Turvey;
14 Layla Law-Gisiko.

15 And then based on our list, it appears that
16 the following speakers are not present. If you are
17 present and I read your name on this next list,
18 please let us know by emailing
19 help@publicworkspartners.com.

20 Rachael Fauss;
21 Margaret J. Finch;
22 Michael Bournas-Ney;
23 Damyanti Radheshwar.

24 Okay. At this time, our first speaker will
25 be Benny Landa.

2 Benny Landa, you may unmute yourself and let
3 us know when you're ready.

4 MR. LANDA: Hey guys. I'm Benny. Okay. I'm
5 ready. I'm going to try keep this short. I'm a
6 professional musician since I was a teenager, I grew
7 up in Lower Chelsea and the Village and you know, now
8 I still live in Chelsea but just up and west.

9 And I think it's horrible what's happening.
10 And I wrote down a few things because I want to keep
11 it quick and concise. But I think cleaning up and
12 fixing Penn Station is a great idea for years, you
13 know, I've thought that.

14 But this, you know, knocking buildings down,
15 and you know, throwing people out of their homes.
16 You know, Steve Marshall is a great friend of mine,
17 I've worked with him, I've been with him in the
18 studio. And a few other friends of mine, Arno and
19 Charlie Roth, I heard them speak.

20 And I think what we need to do is just help
21 the sick and homeless people in the neighborhood, you
22 know, clean Penn Station. You know, big corporate
23 buildings, you know. I know people who work in these
24 big corporate buildings and they're 75 percent of
25 them have told me I'm not going back to the office,

2 I'm working from home, you know.

3 And in the last ten years since 48th Street
4 went down, you know, I've been watching us lose work,
5 the places we've played, you know. And I mean, I'm
6 lucky to be a studio musician unless I might be
7 broke, I might be homeless.

8 Anyway, I just -- I'm against it, you know,
9 the corporations -- there's plenty of places to build
10 a skyscraper that's going to be freaking empty. You
11 know, and tearing down a church, I mean come on, man.
12 You know, is anything sacred anymore?

13 Anyway, I hope it doesn't happen. You know,
14 can we just fix the problems and help people who need
15 help, and you know, if there's criminals, you know,
16 arrest them, you know.

17 I mean, just this neighborhood -- I've been
18 rehearsing and working in this neighborhood my whole
19 adult life since I was a teenager. You know, with my
20 first good guitar. And you know, when 251 went away,
21 I was like you know, holy shit, what are we going to
22 do?

23 So I don't know. I've said my piece, you
24 know. The rich get richer and you know, and we
25 pay -- you know, we pay taxes for them. And you know

2 it's bullshit, I'm sick of it.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

4 MR. LANDA: Anyway, thanks for letting me say
5 my piece.

6 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be David Hanrihan.

9 David. Yep. We see you.

10 MR. HANRIHAN: Hi everybody. And Celeste,
11 thank you very much for staying up this late. My
12 name is David Hanrihan, I'm here with my son Jared.

13 And we are -- our lives have been changed
14 dramatically by the people that live in the
15 neighborhood around Penn Station and Madison Square
16 Garden.

17 Steve Marshall is a member of the music
18 community. There are many small business, I've heard
19 a lot of people talk about the balance between
20 business and people, businesses and people in New
21 York City. And I think taking the neighborhood that
22 changed our lives -- this is my son, Jared. He
23 started to study music with Steve Marshall in his
24 studio on 30th Street when he was ten years old.

25 And Jared, can you tell us a little bit about

2 how that changed your life?

3 JARED HANRIHAN: Yeah, I'm actually a working
4 touring solo artist now that has a pretty fairly
5 successful career in music. And the only reason that
6 I can say that is because Steve Marshall took me in
7 and brought me around, not only to just the place
8 that he lives in that building, but everywhere on the
9 whole block. We were there almost every weekend from
10 when I was around 11 years old to 16 years old.

11 We were playing, going to music shops and
12 networking with everyone on the street and kind of
13 building a cool community of a lot of the people you
14 talked to here actually tonight. I've seen a lot of
15 familiar faces.

16 But it's where I learned how to play the
17 guitar, it's where I recorded my first ever original
18 music, it's where I rehearsed with my first ever live
19 performances and it's where I've made my whole life
20 and career, which is what I do now.

21 MR. HANRIHAN: And I have to jump in here
22 because as his dad, I was very proud that Steve
23 Marshall and his studio in that neighborhood in New
24 York City, so important to various benefits.
25 Hurricane Sandy, Steve Marshall helped raise a ton of

2 money for the victims, breast cancer, ALS.

3 So the neighborhood isn't just a place for
4 people to live. It's a place for people that live
5 there to help the community. And that's a far cry
6 from huge skyscrapers and developers that are going
7 to make a lot of money.

8 And I've heard a lot of people talk about how
9 the taxpayers are going to have to fund that, like
10 other projects in the city.

11 All I can say is that the neighborhood that's
12 there is not blighted, it's a beautiful place. And
13 like other people have mentioned, all those
14 buildings, including Steve Marshall himself, have put
15 in hundreds of thousands of dollars to renovate these
16 buildings.

17 So given the State of New York, the City of
18 New York and all of the building developers, money is
19 great but it's -- it's going to hurt a lot of people
20 that live there. And like Steve said, why are the
21 homeless people crazy? It's because they've been
22 kicked out of their homes.

23 Anyway, hope you have a good night.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you very much for
25 your testimony.

2 Our next speaker will be Felicia Park-Rogers.

3 Felicia Park -- there you are.

4 MS. PARK-ROGERS: Hi.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: We can see you and hear
6 you.

7 MS. PARK-ROGERS: I'm Felicia Park-Rogers.
8 Sorry?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Sorry, I was just
10 saying that we can see and hear you.

11 MS. PARK-ROGERS: Great. I'm director of
12 regional infrastructure projects at Tristate
13 Transportation Campaign, a regional transit and
14 transportation policy and advocacy organization. I
15 also represent Tristate on the community advisory
16 committee for this project.

17 I have never been on tour with a band and I
18 don't have anywhere near as cool of a story as the
19 previous speakers, but I do have a master's in urban
20 planning.

21 The GPP and DEIS point us in the direction of
22 reimagining the street scape and attracting
23 businesses, residents and visitors with integrated
24 transit solutions in and around Penn Station.

25 We at Tristate Transportation Campaign

2 appreciate and the work and effort of ESD to make
3 revisions to the scope and documents. However, much
4 work is still required to create a thoughtful and
5 carefully constructed vision of how the below ground
6 and aboveground pieces of this puzzle fit together.

7 Doing this right with improved safety,
8 reliability and ease of use of transit is crucial to
9 success for the redevelopment of the area. Given the
10 complexity of the project and the various
11 stakeholders involved; including the MTA, New Jersey
12 Transit and Amtrak. We believe there should be one
13 overriding organization -- organizing authority,
14 similar to the Gateway Development Corporation to
15 create one comprehensive plan for both transit and
16 public realm improvements. Sorry, I'm a little
17 tired. And this is also suggested by the CAP WAG and
18 its recommendations to the ESD.

19 Today we have a new leadership at the state
20 and city levels. The city's leadership has been
21 noticeably absent from this process. For the state
22 to redevelop the heart of our city without more city
23 input is a mistake, we have an opportunity to fix in
24 the coming months.

25 Furthermore, we urge ESD and the governor to

2 work in close collaboration with Mayor Adams to bring
3 MSG to the table. MSG receives huge benefits due to
4 their location and proximity to regional transit.
5 They pay no taxes. They must sit at the table and
6 participate in the process of improving Penn Station
7 and the surrounding street scrapes.

8 It is reasonable given the enormous benefits
9 that they receive from their easy access to regional
10 transit and they participate financially in improving
11 that transit for their customers. The public should
12 not have to pay MSG related expenses. It is not
13 possible to fundamentally improve this area without
14 MSG's participation.

15 We would like to see the state and city work
16 with MSG to move their primary entrance to Eighth
17 Avenue to sell the Hulu Theater to the project at a
18 price is not inflated market rate.

19 I have additional specifics that I will
20 include in my written contribution to the project,
21 but I would like to say right now that in the event
22 of displacement of residences, businesses and
23 non-profit office space, what provisions will be made
24 to fully mitigate the negative impact of their
25 displacement.

2 Tristate Transportation Campaign --

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
4 testimony, I'm sorry you -- you may submit the
5 balance of your testimony in writing as you
6 mentioned. And thanks for your patience.

7 I believe that our next speaker is not
8 present, Rachael Fauss.

9 We'll move on. Brad Vogel. Yes. Ready to
10 go.

11 MR. VOGEL: Thank you very much. First, do
12 no harm. My name is Brad Vogel and I'm here tonight
13 on behalf of the City Club of New York, which is part
14 of the Empire Station Coalition, opposing this plan.

15 And we oppose this plan because it flips the
16 Hippocratic oath on its head, seeking first to do
17 maximum harm to our city. Our great urban patient is
18 being set up for radical amputation when limited
19 surgery would do.

20 The proposed complex uses multiple pretexts.
21 Two of them that I wanted to focus are one, the bogus
22 self-created blight that is being used as a basis for
23 this project. And a second one, which is the
24 tower-based financing that is likely going to be
25 obviated by federal funds.

2 All of these pretexts create a mega blight,
3 one that displaces thousands of residents and
4 businesses, one that destroys scores of historic
5 landmark-worthy buildings. One that wastes a massive
6 environmental reservoir of embodied carbon and
7 energy.

8 Governor Hochul, I hope you are still up here
9 with us at 12:55 or so A.M. You still have a chance
10 to prove that you understand that this project
11 exceeds ESD's legislative authority and mandate. You
12 have a chance to prove that you've learned the
13 lessons of history, that so-called urban renewal
14 megaprojects kill cities. You have a chance to prove
15 that you are not just a puppet of megadonors like
16 Vornado and friends. Prove us right, show us you are
17 something new on the scene and not just Cuomo-lite
18 transit as a pretext of all pretexts.

19 New York City is about change, yes. But all
20 too often dynamism is summed up in a dead phrase,
21 parroted without nuance, we can and must do better
22 than the upholstering doll style of change that is
23 embodied in this plan.

24 The Gimbel's Sky Bridge, St. John the Baptist
25 Church, the Penn Service Building, Hotel

2 Pennsylvania, change that respects and retains
3 significant cultural and historic landmarks like
4 these and others that actually fully explores through
5 running, that's the kind of change that we need to
6 keep our city healthy.

7 As it is, the current Penn Station plan is
8 one that is essentially as good as bloodletting, it
9 is something that we should toss aside. This plan as
10 it currently stands is an unmitigated hot mess.

11 And I would ask for the ESD, Governor Hochul
12 and for any public officials including city officials
13 who are allowing this end run around city zoning laws
14 to happen, I would ask you to deep six this plan.
15 Thank you.

16 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 Our next speaker will be Samuel Turvey.

19 Samuel Turvey. If you are present, please
20 let us know if you're ready to speak. All right. We
21 see you and I think you're unmuted as well so you may
22 begin when you're ready.

23 MR. TURVEY: Thank you. I'm Sam Turvey, I am
24 the chair person of Rethink New York City.

25 You maybe wondering why I'm wearing a mask

2 tonight. I don't need to wear a mask at home, but as
3 you may notice, this mask shows the original Penn
4 Station and you can buy this charming beauty at the
5 New York City Historical Society. Please tell Louise
6 Marin and Marilyn Kushner that I sent you. It's a
7 worthy cause for them.

8 We should talk about the original Penn
9 Station, because that's what this is really supposed
10 to be about, a great aboveground station and a great
11 transit plan below. And as many have pointed out,
12 that's the last thing we seem to be talking about
13 tonight.

14 My organization believes that you could
15 rebuild the original Penn Station. You know, there's
16 something else you could get when you go to New York
17 Historical Society and that's where the plans for the
18 original Penn Station are. So it would be very easy
19 for us to replicate it. The original foundation
20 still exists.

21 Now, some of you may say, wow, Sam, that's
22 really crazy or that must be really expensive. And I
23 will submit to you that it would be crazy not to
24 rebuild and I can spend a lot of time talking about
25 that offline, but you're just going to have to trust

2 me on that one.

3 And we have a lot of rock and roll references
4 going on tonight, so I know some of you may say I'm a
5 dreamer, but I'm not the only one.

6 Now, why do I say it would be crazy not to
7 rebuild the original Penn Station? Well, as it is
8 all this destruction that they're talking about is to
9 help spend seven and a half billion dollars to build
10 a Penn Station or revitalize the present Penn Station
11 as a basement.

12 We're going to give it a higher ceiling and
13 there's all this talk of this light atrium they're
14 going to build that they're suggesting is bigger than
15 Grand Central. It's not true, it's 450 feet long and
16 about 40 feet wide, it's about five to ten percent of
17 the current station.

18 And if they build the Penn Station south as
19 they're claiming they're going to do, it will be
20 about 2 percent of the station will be bathed in that
21 natural light. That is -- should be embarrassing to
22 that all. There's nothing world class about that.

23 So too with the public realm that they're
24 talking about, they're creating a super block. When
25 they rebuilt the Trade Center, we decided not to have

2 super blocks, that is not a good urban concept.

3 We also should be looking towards a modern
4 transit plan. You're running a plan that you heard
5 about could raise the capacity within the existing
6 envelope of Penn Station and eliminate the need to
7 demolish 33rd Street.

8 Why are we even talking about anything else?
9 There's, you know, 31st Street, you've heard a lot
10 about the musicians, you've heard a lot about the
11 businesses there. There's Class B and C office space
12 there. Those are things that we need to have a
13 vibrant, diverse multi-use city.

14 There are plenty of prewar one-story
15 buildings in the neighborhood if you want to do new
16 construction, you can. But let's preserve the best
17 of the past. We don't need to be throwing out
18 residents and the whole like of things.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

20 MR. TURVEY: Well, if I only have ten
21 seconds, I'll close with this:

22 We want Seneca Falls or Bedford Falls, we
23 don't want Pottersville. Let's not make Pottersville
24 at Penn Station.

25 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your

2 testimony.

3 Our next speaker will be Layla Law-Gisiko. I
4 see you and you're unmuted as well.

5 MS. LAW-GISIKO: All right. Good evening,
6 good night I should say. My name is Layla
7 Law-Gisiko, I'm the chair of the Land Use, Housing
8 and Zoning Committee of Community Board 5.

9 CB5 has expressed numerous objections during
10 prior hearings and in numerous resolutions and we
11 continue to strongly object to the proposal. We want
12 to make it clear that this plan is not about Penn
13 Station. It will not fix the station, it will not
14 improve it, it will not even touch it. This will be
15 done under separate plans.

16 And we're getting misled here. This project
17 is only about real estate and land use project. We
18 believe that Penn Station must be modernized to allow
19 further growth and adaptability to provide core
20 access to the region.

21 But this project we're testifying about
22 tonight, unfortunately, does not do that, the
23 confusion is blatant, deliberate and unfortunate. It
24 is an absolute priority to build the gateway tunnels
25 under the Hudson River and to reconstruct them,

2 especially the platforms. These projects are
3 segmented and will be considered under separate
4 plans.

5 Once again, this GPP does not concern Penn in
6 any way, shape or form. The GPP a land use and real
7 estate action, has done major destruction from the
8 infrastructure and transit projects. Now is not the
9 time to discuss commercial real estate. The
10 segmentation takes our focus away from the priority,
11 and it also does not afford us the ability to review
12 the plans in a comprehensive fashion.

13 The GPP and the MTA plan don't consider
14 through running. Through running would allow trains
15 to go from New Jersey to Long Island to provide true
16 connectivity to the regional network. Through
17 running is the only sustainable way to increase
18 capacity and mobility for the region. The GPP does
19 not provide an above grade train hall or a dignified
20 entrance. The station would not reclaim its
21 legitimate place in our streetscape. We're simply
22 repeating and perpetuating mistakes of the past by
23 keeping Penn Station in the basement while proposing
24 to build superficial towers on top of the tracks.

25 The building environment will not permit the

2 flexibility needed for Penn Station to adopt and grow
3 over the next century. We must remember that we have
4 the opportunity of a lifetime to leverage federal
5 funding and therefore, it is critical to get it right
6 and to get it now.

7 How can such a plan move forward after such
8 massive opposition? It is 1:00 a.m. I don't know
9 even know how or why we end up having such lengthy
10 hearings with no accommodation. This should be
11 really reworked by ESD. But you've heard already 200
12 testimonies tonight, most of them against the plan.
13 ESD must not ignore this opposition.

14 We call on ESD as well Governor Hochul to
15 withdraw this fatally flawed plan and we call on our
16 elected officials to continue to oppose this plan in
17 the most vigorous fashion. Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 We'll now move to the next list of speakers.
21 This list of speakers is actually our final list of
22 speakers, so for those of you who are still with us,
23 thank you again for your patience and remember that
24 you may also submit your testimony in written format
25 to the email or U.S. mail addresses listed on the

2 slides.

3 Our final list of speakers who appear to be
4 present are:

5 Alison Greenberg;

6 Thomas Rinaldi;

7 Lorna Nowve;

8 Richard Ronner;

9 And William Otterson.

10 Registered speakers who do not appear to be
11 present include; Renee Kinsella, Omri Semadar and
12 Alexandros Washburn.

13 If you were one of those last three names
14 called, please email help@publicworkspartners.com to
15 let us know that you were present.

16 And so with that, we will begin with Alison
17 Greenberg.

18 And we can see you, just unmute yourself and
19 you may begin.

20 MS. GREENBERG: Thank you. Alison Greenberg.
21 I'm a resident of the Upper West Side.

22 The people who have spoken in December and
23 tonight, the testimony has overwhelmingly been
24 against the Vornado, Cuomo, Hochul and ESD plan. I
25 oppose it too. So many compelling arguments have

2 been made tonight in opposition to the plan.

3 Tonight I'm objecting in particular to the
4 destruction of two iconic hotel buildings. The
5 historic hotel located at 371-377 Seventh Avenue is
6 referenced in Table 8-1 of the draft EIS as eligible
7 for designation under state and national registries,
8 as well as being New York City Landmarks eligible.

9 In an environmental review letter, dated
10 December 14, 2020 the LPC determined that the
11 historic hotel appears to be eligible for NYC
12 Landmarks designation but the LPC has not taken
13 action to designate this hotel.

14 The Hotel Pennsylvania was designated --
15 designed by the famous McKin, Mead & White firm, the
16 same architects of the original Penn Station, the
17 grand Penn Station that was tragically demolished in
18 the 1960s.

19 Hotel Pennsylvania is listed in the DEIS as
20 state and national and register eligible for
21 designation. It is also worthy of designation by the
22 Landmarks Preservation Commission. Both hotels are
23 beautiful and important individually. They are part
24 of the iconic Gotham streetscape that is New York.
25 Both buildings will be demolished due to this

2 misguided plan.

3 EDS, Miss Light in particular and Governor
4 Hochul, how can you advance this shear, obscene, mass
5 waste displayed by the destruction of such massive
6 iconic buildings? Where is the concern for the
7 environment? Or can you see the economic and moral
8 value in choosing adaptive reuse instead? What will
9 we get with the current plan? Destruction, waste and
10 more mundane glass towers that will not have full
11 occupancy.

12 New York residents and small businesses
13 owners do not want the ESD to bulldoze these
14 buildings. There are nearly 50 buildings in the site
15 area worthy of consideration for preservation.
16 Please, by all means, I support cleaning the interior
17 of Penn Station and even replacing it with a better
18 building, but this plan is so misguided. It must be
19 stopped. Destruction and displacement or
20 rehabilitation and renewal. Union jobs are
21 absolutely supported by adaptive reuse.

22 Please stop the Vornado tornado. Please stop
23 this misguided plan. Thank you.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

2 Our next speaker will be Thomas Rinaldi. And
3 I believe I saw you with your video on just a moment
4 ago. So I can see you and you are not muted so begin
5 when you're ready.

6 MR. RINALDI: Okay. Good evening. Thank you
7 for the opportunity to speak here tonight. Thanks
8 for staying up so late and making this happen.

9 My name is Tom Rinaldi. As someone who both
10 lives and works near Penn Station, as a frequent user
11 of this station, I cannot say how disappointed I am
12 by the proposal of that we are here to discuss
13 tonight.

14 On its face, it seems as if this proposal is
15 almost going out of its way to demonstrate a complete
16 disregard for everything we are supposed to have
17 learned about architecture, urban planning in the
18 wake of the mistakes of the last century. One of the
19 largest of those mistakes being the destruction of
20 the original Penn Station at this very spot.

21 Here at what is basically ground zero for
22 historic preservation in the city, not even a single
23 bone has been thrown to those of us who care about
24 the historic buildings slated to be destroyed for
25 this plan.

2 Instead, a vibrant area full of the kinds of
3 contrasts that make the streetscapes interesting and
4 make New York the kind of place so many of us wanted
5 to come to in the first place is to be ripped out
6 wholesale and replaced with expanses of glass and
7 steel towers and hardscaped public plazas that look
8 like they belong more in an Atlanta suburb than
9 here -- no offense to Atlanta -- that are completely
10 antithetical to what Jane Jacobs talked about in the
11 "Death And Life Of Great American Cities". And
12 everything that Rem Koolhaas celebrated in his book,
13 "Delirious New York."

14 Speaking again as somebody who lives and
15 works in the area and uses the station frequently,
16 yes, of course let's please improve Penn Station and
17 the work that's done should be done by union labor,
18 of course.

19 No, we don't want to pickle the area in amber
20 and not let anything change. New York is a city
21 wrought of change and there's lots of room here for
22 the kinds of change for change and improvement and
23 for lots of union jobs in doing so.

24 But let's do this right. Here of all places,
25 let's not make another giant mistake where we'll be

2 shaking our heads at for another 60 years or more.
3 Let's capitalize on what we learned from episodes
4 like the loss of the old station and let's build
5 great new buildings here in between the great
6 historic buildings that are here.

7 And these are the kind of historic buildings
8 that make our city different from -- and I say this
9 as a proud New Yorker -- they make our city better
10 than places like Dubai and Singapore, again, no
11 offense to them. But as a proud New Yorker, the kind
12 of cities that are built from scratch in China in the
13 matter of a couple of years, we have something that
14 those places don't have and here we are, ready to
15 throw it away.

16 This is not even to mention that such a huge
17 undertaking is proposed to be done while totally
18 sidestepping the process as established exactly to
19 prevent these kinds of Robert Moses-era mistakes from
20 being again.

21 In short, let's retool this plan for this
22 area to give us the best of the new while keeping the
23 best of the old, let's make it a model for how we can
24 do better than we did in the bad old days. Let's
25 make this a project that doesn't gut the soul of the

2 area. We can have our cake --

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

4 MR. RINALDI: -- instead of trying to chew on
5 a plate of glass and steel. Thank you very much.
6 Good night everyone.

7 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good night and thank
8 you for your testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be Lorna Nowve.
10 Apologies, I hope I've gotten your name right.

11 Hi. We can see you. If you would just
12 unmute, we can begin.

13 MS. NOWVE: Yes. Hi good morning, everyone.
14 Is everybody still awake? Thanks so much for
15 waiting. I'm Lorna Nowve, the interim executive
16 director of the Historic Districts Council.

17 We presented our initial testimony during the
18 December 8th hearing. In it we drew the comparison
19 between destructive urban renewal practices of the
20 1960s and the proposal under discussion this morning.

21 Furthermore, HDC underscored the need to
22 protect, not demolish the over 35 buildings cited in
23 the DEIS as eligible for city and/or state and
24 national register recognition.

25 Since then we've been incredibly heartened by

2 the overwhelming groundswell of outrage that is being
3 expressed by New Yorkers over the scale and scope of
4 the Penn Area plan. This evening is a perfect
5 example of all of these eloquent voices.

6 As news of the EDC's plan's total lack of
7 regard for the historic and available and vital
8 landscape spread, New Yorkers who live, work and walk
9 through the area took the time to read about the
10 veritable who's who of architects whose work can be
11 found within the boundaries of the proposed site;
12 McKim, Mead & White; Cross & Cross; William, Walker
13 and Gillette; Daniel Burnham; Shriev and Lam and
14 Napoleon LeBrun.

15 And in doing so, the public realized that
16 this is New York, not a soulless project whose size
17 will exceed that of Hudson Yards.

18 Look at the buildings that high tech and
19 forward-thinking corporations are adapting for use,
20 not anonymous towers, but brick and mortar buildings.
21 Demolishing the texture of the city is extremely
22 misguided and will violate the city's landmark law.
23 And by the way, adaptive reuse projects create
24 construction jobs as well.

25 There's been talk today about special

2 interests supporting the Governor's campaign. Well,
3 here's another special interest group, the people of
4 New York. The passionate New Yorkers who have joined
5 us this evening to express their concern because we
6 want to save New York. We love this city.

7 So Governor Hochul, hit pause on the plan.
8 This is a priceless opportunity to begin to build the
9 legacy that acknowledges the concerns of the people
10 of New York while creating a 21st century
11 transportation hub, combined with a newly envisioned
12 plan could be a true landmark for New York City.
13 Thank you.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Our next speaker will be Richard Ronner who I
17 believe is already on video. You may unmute yourself
18 and begin.

19 MR. RONNER: Okay. Thanks very much and good
20 morning, everybody.

21 I do not live in the neighborhood in
22 question, I live in Queens and I am really against
23 this plan. It's -- I'm just -- I'm very moved with
24 all the testimony we've heard. I'm really proud to
25 be part of this. People, though it seems, do not

2 have much faith and trust in our government. As one
3 person said, this is what corruption is. Money
4 determines what happens, not what's right or what's
5 needed. It's unfortunately money. Follow the money.

6 I think the transportation issues that are
7 supposed to be this plan's primary purpose have not
8 been addressed and that's what needs to happen before
9 buildings start coming down. As our Public Advocate
10 stated, let's slow this process down or stop it.

11 There are many more good ideas that we've
12 heard that are not being considered, you know,
13 because it's not where the money is. Like through
14 running trains.

15 I think this is a great opportunity to move
16 Madison Square Garden, it's always these things have
17 been said so many times and so eloquently and to
18 rebuild a beautiful above ground train station
19 appropriate for a world-class city.

20 I'm also against the project as one of the
21 greatest land giveaways, as Howard Helmsley said
22 awhile ago, since the Dutch bought Manhattan Island.

23 Vornado has bought us all up, it seems, with
24 their slick premises and possibly including our
25 governor.

2 I love the beautiful older buildings that are
3 slated for destruction and I really hope this doesn't
4 go through. This neighborhood is home to thousands
5 of residents and businesses and jobs, all have been
6 grossly undercounted by Vornado. And as others have
7 said, we need to stop the Robert Moses style urban
8 renewal. This neighborhood is not blighted.

9 I myself really hate these mega tall glass
10 skyscrapers. They depress me, they make me feel like
11 a little bug. That's not the city I want to live in.
12 So let's save our beautiful city and let it be home
13 to people.

14 I want to say a word about all the union
15 workers and officials that have that been roused and
16 prompted to express their support of this project. I
17 think you all should have -- I think everyone should
18 have meaningful work that pays well.

19 I come from a union family myself, and it's
20 always been a real disappointment to me, but it is a
21 fact how unions become such a reactionary force,
22 selling themselves and their members to the highest
23 bidder and sometimes to some very bad players.

24 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds.

25 MR. RONNER: You could fight for having a

2 good job, building something worthwhile.

3 And I think that's what we're all trying to
4 do. Thank you very much.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you so much for
6 your testimony.

7 Our next speaker is William Otterson.

8 MR. OTTERSON: Start video?

9 THE HEARING OFFICER: Yes. We can see you
10 and hear you. You may begin when you're ready.

11 MR. OTTERSON: Okay. Hi. I'm William
12 Otterson. The Hotel Pennsylvania's demolition
13 reveals Vornado's voracious appetite for useless
14 office space. Styling its own nest, as the glutton
15 swallows our neighborhood and defecates on our world.

16 Vornado's planned Penn Station addition, ten
17 ultra-tall towers are destined to become the faulty
18 doomed dead-end high rise boondoggle foisted upon us
19 by a shortsighted real estate tycoon and Amtrak.

20 COVID has made the world realize that office
21 workers who can, will work from home and fewer are
22 commuting to and from work. That's two and a half
23 hours each working day most commuters give up just to
24 to get to and from the office. Those new nine tracks
25 and five platforms will hardly be used.

2 This plan will rob senior citizens of their
3 legal New York rent protection by using a federal
4 authority to execute the condemnation of the
5 buildings.

6 I am a 74-year old senior citizen who has
7 lived on West 30th Street for over 44 years in a
8 rent-stabilized apartment that benefits from SCRIE.
9 If I'm evicted using the federal condemnation
10 authority, I will be out on the street and receive
11 only a one-time compensation of few thousand dollars
12 with no place to live in New York City. The few
13 thousand dollars in compensation won't even pay for
14 half a year of rent in this city.

15 The two tunnel boring machines used to
16 excavate the new Long Island Railroad railroad
17 station at Grand Central have been stored below Park
18 Avenue at East 38th Street. That's three quarters of
19 a mile and a direct line from Penn Station. Once
20 fired up, they can tunnel a 50 feet a day. Fire them
21 up and let them chew their way to Penn Station in
22 less than a hundred days.

23 When in place at Penn, they can bore multiple
24 22-foot diameter cylindrical tunnels, creating enough
25 space for the Empire State complex of five platforms

2 and nine tracks 50 feet below the current Penn
3 Station tracks.

4 Grand Central operates on two levels, Penn
5 Station can too. Additional tunnels can be bored,
6 achieving the deep-seated desire to have more through
7 running trains to and from Long Island, upstate New
8 York, New Jersey, Connecticut, the northeast and
9 states beyond.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ten seconds. Thank you
11 very much for your testimony.

12 And then excuse me -- we have one additional
13 speaker who had been signed up to speak earlier,
14 Mirna Rodriguez.

15 Yep, I can see you. If you can unmute
16 yourself you can start when you're ready.

17 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I live at [REDACTED]
18 [REDACTED] and I've been living here for 43 years. I
19 raised my two kids here, I nursed my mother here
20 until she passed, I nursed my brother here until he
21 passed. This place means a world to me. This is my
22 home. I love my home, I do not want to be displaced.

23 I am totally against this plan. This is very
24 stressful and worrisome, to say the least. I also
25 speak for my neighbors whom could not be on Zoom and

2 also for all the homeless people that have been
3 coming to be serviced at the homeless center on 30th
4 Street for more than 40 years. There is a lot of
5 people worried out there about their jobs in our
6 building alone.

7 There has been -- there has to be a better
8 plan that works for everyone. There's no need to
9 demolish our home on 30th Street, our church and our
10 community. No need to demolish our memories.

11 If I sound calm, it's not because I'm not
12 fearful or angry, I am. I'm sure all this stress is
13 affecting my mental and physical health. Please,
14 find a better plan for all.

15 I do agree that Penn Station needs renovation
16 and to be a safe place for all. I just oppose the
17 plan. Thank you for listening and thank you for your
18 patience.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 And at this point, we have reached the end of
22 our registered speakers, both those who registered in
23 advance and those who raised their hands before
24 7:30 p.m.

25 Thank you to everyone who has been a part of

2 this public hearing and it was very important. I
3 thank to all of us involved, that all the speakers
4 had the opportunity to share their testimony.

5 The Empire State Development team -- project
6 team is still on the hearing and has heard of all
7 this testimony in addition to it being recorded for
8 the stenographic transcript.

9 That stenographic transcript, as well as the
10 slide presentation will be available on the project
11 website at -- at ESD.NY.GOV -- sorry, I don't have it
12 right in front of me but it will come back on a
13 slide.

14 A final reminder that written comments on the
15 GPP, DEIS and proposed revisions will be accepted
16 until 5:00 p.m. on January 10, 2022.

17 Thank you again for joining us tonight for
18 the second Penn Station area redevelopment project
19 GPP, DEIS and proposed revisions public hearing.

20 At this time, I'm going to close the hearing.
21 But first I'll take care of some administrative
22 matters by asking the stenographer to mark the
23 following documents as exhibits for the hearing
24 transcript:

25 Exhibit 1, a copy of the public hearing

2 notice that appeared in the New York Daily News along
3 with the affidavit of publication.

4 Exhibit 2, the draft General Project Plan.

5 Exhibit 3, the Draft Environmental Impact
6 Statement.

7 Exhibit 4, a copy of the environmental notice
8 bulletin for the notice of acceptance of the DEIS and
9 public hearing dated December 29th, 2021.

10 And Exhibit 5, ESD staff's proposed revisions
11 to the plan.

12 (The aforementioned documents were marked as
13 Hearing Exhibits 1-5.)

14 Thank you for marking those exhibits.

15 And just a final reminder that you may submit
16 any comments you have on any of these documents to
17 the addresses on the screen and this information is
18 also available on ESD's website. Comments will be
19 accepted in until 5:00 p.m. on February 22nd, 2022.

20 Thank you all very much and have a good
21 night.

22 (Whereupon, at 1:23 a.m., the
23 above matter concluded.)

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2 C E R T I F I C A T E

3

4 STATE OF NEW YORK)
5 COUNTY OF RICHMOND) : SS.:

6

7 I, MADELINE TAVANI, a Notary Public for and
8 within the State of New York, do hereby certify:

9 That the above is a correct transcription of
10 my stenographic notes.

11 I further certify that I am not related to
12 any of the parties to this action by blood or by
13 marriage and that I am in no way interested in the
14 outcome of this matter.

15 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
16 hand this 24th day of January, 2022.

17

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MADELINE TAVANI

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